



The Ancient Magus' Bride

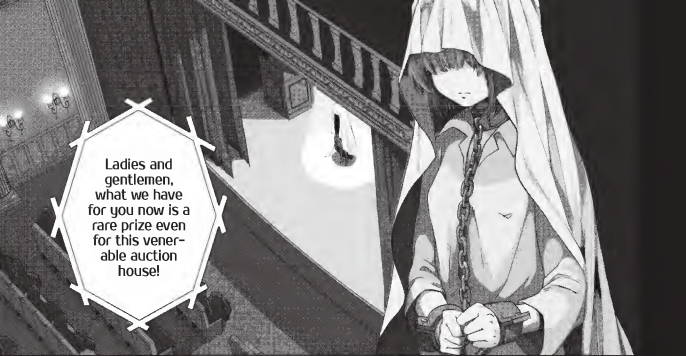
1

Story & Art by
KORE YAMAZAKI



The
Ancient
Magus' Bride





Ladies and gentlemen, what we have for you now is a rare prize even for this venerable auction house!

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

ONE POINT ONE!

ONE AND A HALF!

ONE POINT EIGHT!

OOH!

THERE IT IS!

THE BIDS ARE SO HIGH! WHAT IS THAT THING?

TWO MILLION!

TWO AND A QUARTER!

YOU DON'T KNOW? REALLY?

I'VE NEVER SEEN ONE BEFORE!

Do I hear one million pounds?

ALL I WANT IS A PLACE I CAN CALL HOME.

FIVE MILLION.

A SLEIGH BEGGY.

IT'S THE MOST WONDROUS TOOL AN ALCHEMIST CAN HOPE FOR.



YES.
I'VE
MADE
MY
DECISION.

I'LL
TAKE YOU
AS MY
APPRENTICE.

Chapter 1: April showers bring May flowers.

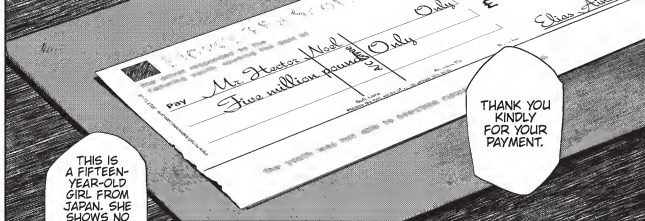
The
Ancient
Magus' Bride



BENEATH THE
HEAVY VEIL...
BEYOND THE
DULL WALL OF
CEMENT...
DEEP, DEEP
WITHIN THE
ANCIENT, MISTY
FOREST...

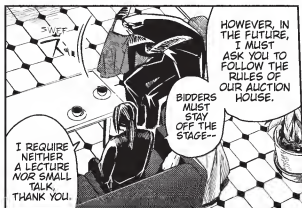
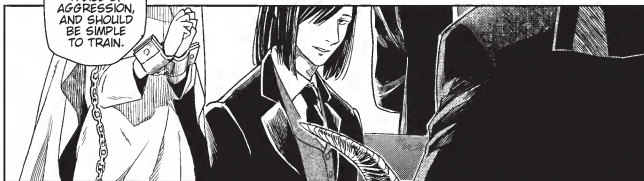
THERE
LIES
ANOTHER
WORLD.

THAT WORLD
IS FAR
CLOSER TO
OURS THAN
YOU MIGHT
IMAGINE.



THIS IS
A FIFTEEN-
YEAR-OLD
GIRL FROM
JAPAN. SHE
SHOWS NO
TRACE OF
AGGRESSION,
AND SHOULD
BE SIMPLE
TO TRAIN.

THANK YOU
KINDLY
FOR YOUR
PAYMENT.



I REQUIRE
NEITHER
A LECTURE
NOR SMALL
TALK,
THANK YOU.

HOWEVER, IN
THE FUTURE,
I MUST
ASK YOU TO
FOLLOW THE
RULES OF
OUR AUCTION
HOUSE.

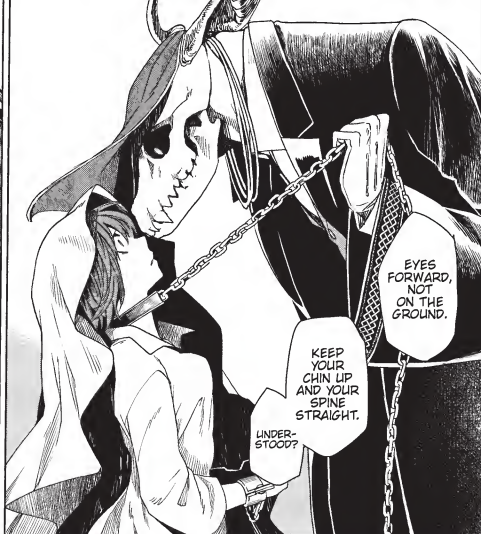
BIDDERS
MUST STAY
OFF THE
STAGE--



I
CONFESS
I WAS
QUITE
PLEASANTLY
SURPRISED
TO SEE
YOU AT
TODAY'S
AUCTION,
SIR.



YES,
SIR...



EYES
FORWARD,
NOT
ON THE
GROUND.

KEEP
YOUR
CHIN UP
AND YOUR
SPINE
STRAIGHT.

UNDER-
STOOD?

HE'S A
RARITY
IN THIS
DAY AND
AGE.



BTAN

WHO
WAS
THAT
CREEPY
BAS-
TARD?

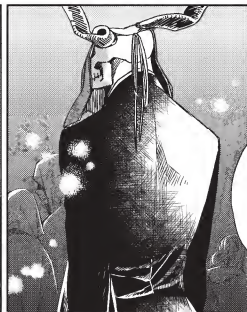
HE'S NO
ALCHEMIST
OR CHAR-
LATAN. HE'S
THE REAL
THING.



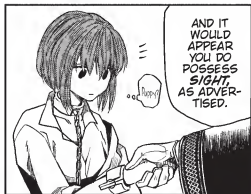
MIND
YOUR
TONGUE.
HE CAN
STILL
HEAR
YOU.

A DIFFERENT
SORT OF
MONSTER
THAN OUR
USUAL
PATRONS--











HEY. IS IT
TRUE YOUR
PARENTS
DITCHED
YOU?



SAME
THING.
ISN'T IT?

NAH, HER
MOMMY
KILLED
HERSELF.
SHE'S GOT
NOBODY.



BUT
STILL,
SHOULDN'T
WE--?

NO. I'M
NOT TAKING
HER, AND
THAT'S THAT.



SHE TALKS
TO HERSELF
AND ACTS
WEIRDLY.

ANYWAY,
I HEAR
THERE'S
SOMETHING
WRONG
WITH HER.



NOT EVEN
HER OWN
MOMMY
WANTED
HER!



MY
"SIGHT"
HAS NEVER
BROUGHT
ME ANY-
THING
GOOD! NOT
EVER!

ANY
LUCK
I'VE
HAD HAS
BEEN
TER-
RIBLE!



NO...



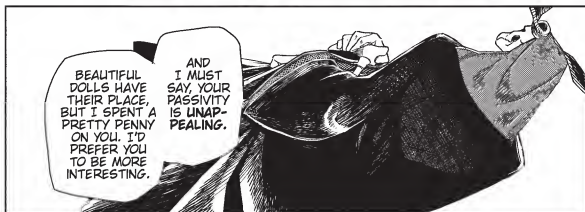
WHAT
...?



I'LL
HAVE TO
ENSURE
YOU'LL
BE GLAD
OF IT ONE
DAY.



IF
THAT'S
SO...



BEAUTIFUL
DOLLS HAVE
THEIR PLACE,
BUT I SPENT A
PRETTY PENNY
ON YOU. I'D
PREFER YOU
TO BE MORE
INTERESTING.

AND
I MUST
SAY, YOUR
PASSIVITY
IS UNAP-
PEALING.

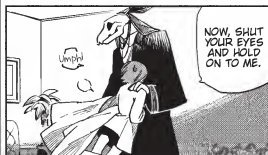


EYES
CLOSED.
YOU MAY
GET
DIZZY.



Huh?
UM...

ER
...?



NOW, SHUT
YOUR EYES
AND HOLD
ON TO ME.



FALSE HOLLY
IN A RING...

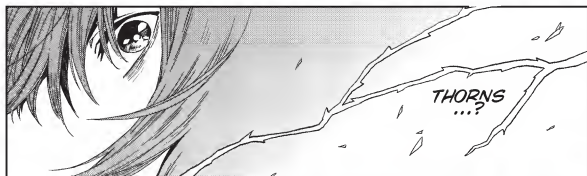
SPIN ROUND TEN TIMES,
TWENTY TIMES...

SPIN A SPIDER'S WEB
ON THAT DISTANT BOUGH.



NETTLE IN THE
SHADOWS...

FWEEE

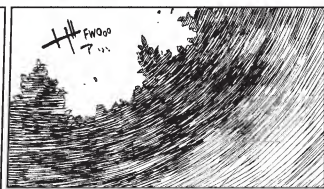


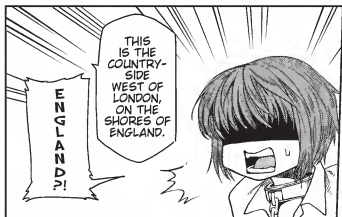
THORNS
...?



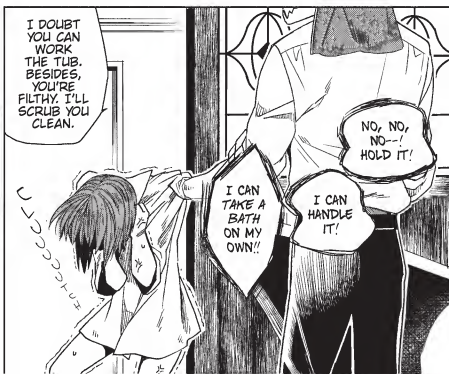
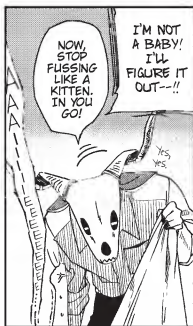
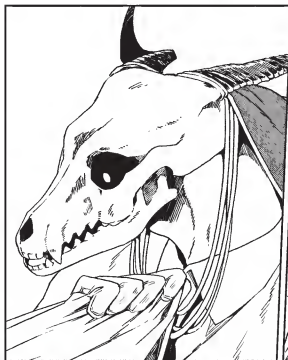
THERE.

YOU
MAY
OPEN
YOUR
EYES
NOW.











COME
OUT
ONCE
YOU'VE
WARMED
UP.



IMMERSE
YOURSELF
TO THE
NECK, OR
THE CHILL
WON'T
LEAVE YOUR
BONES.

THERE
IS NO
GOD.

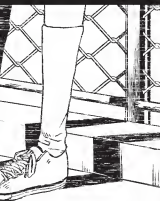
He SAW me
completely
naked!



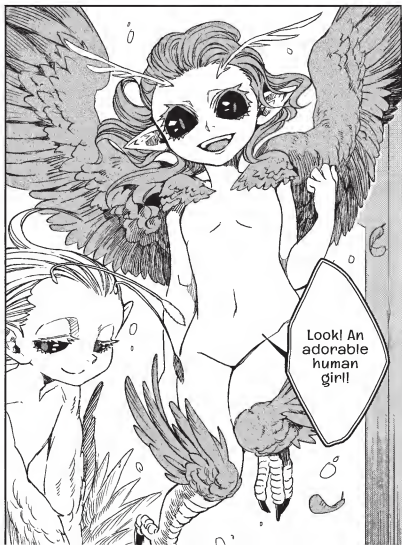
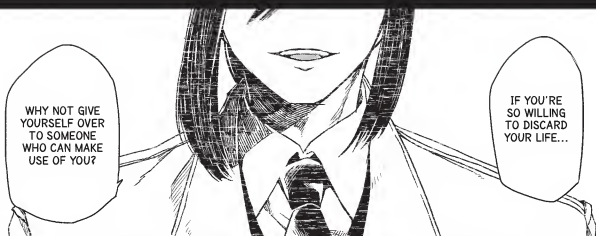
I TOTALLY
FORGOT
TO ASK
HIM FOR
A REAL
EXPLANA-
TION.

SPLASH

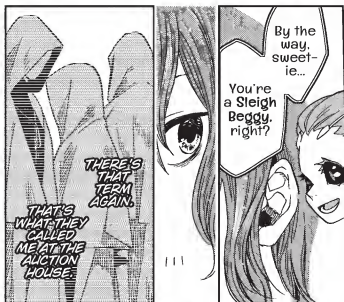
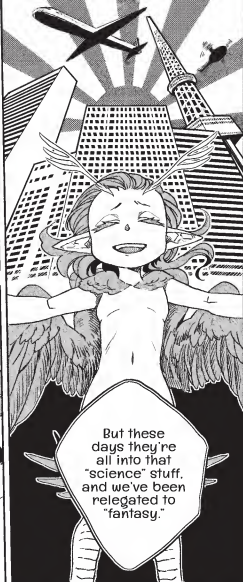
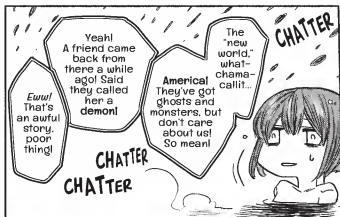
SHUT



BUT...I
NEVER
IMAGINED
I'D HAVE
A GOOD
HOT SOAK
AGAIN.





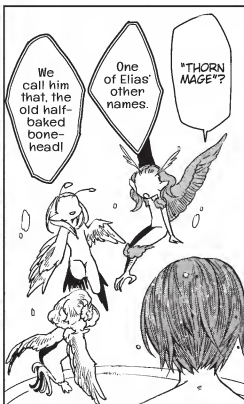




Poor child, sweeter than even honey mead-- the draught more prized than gold or the fairy kingdom's own flowers.

You poor dear! Getting tangled up with a scary-faced monster!

HALF-BAKED ...?



We call him that, the old half-baked bone-head!

One of Elias' other names.

"THORN MAGE"?

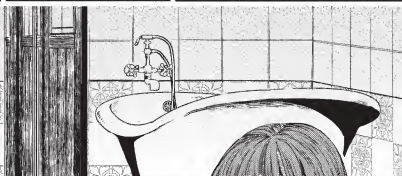
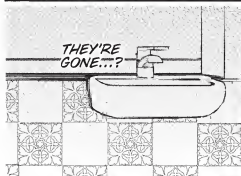


Oh, you lovely little robin, how we adore you!

If you're doomed to be a mage, we'll gladly do all we can to help you.

YOU...
ADORE
ME?







TEA AND
A FULL
MEAL.



I EXPECT YOU PIQUED THEIR CURIOSITY AND THEY CAME TO GREET YOU.

AH, THE ARIELS?



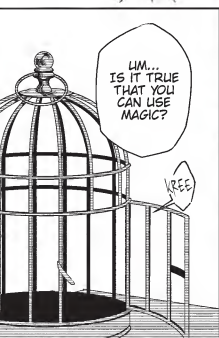
OH.



I'VE NEVER FELT SO COMFORTABLE IN SOMEONE ELSE'S HOUSE.

WHILE I WAS BATHING, SOME FAIRIES VISITED ME.

UM...



UM... IS IT TRUE THAT YOU CAN USE MAGIC?

WREE

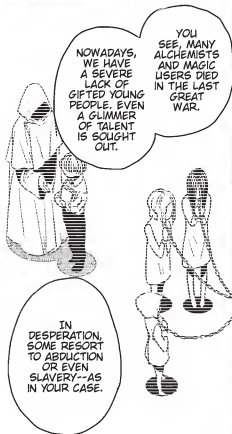


I CAN SEE THAT YOU HAVE MANY QUESTIONS.

VERY WELL, TONIGHT, INSTEAD OF BEDTIME STORIES, I'LL GIVE YOU SOME ANSWERS.



YES,
IT'S
TRUE.



NOWADAYS,
WE HAVE
A SEVERE
LACK OF
GIFTED YOUNG
PEOPLE. EVEN
A GLIMMER
OF TALENT
IS SOUGHT
OUT.

YOU
SEE, MANY
ALCHEMISTS
AND MAGIC
USERS DIED
IN THE LAST
GREAT WAR.

IN
DESPERATION,
SOME RESORT
TO ABDUCTION
OR EVEN
SLAVERY--AS
IN YOUR CASE.



IT
MEANS
YOU'RE
NOW MY
PUPIL,
PUP.

WHAT
DO YOU
MEAN BY
"APPRENTICE"?



I DON'T
KNOW
SPECIFICS,
AS I AVOID
OTHERS
WHEN
POSS-
IBLE.

"AP-
PEAR
TO"?

AND
IRRITATINGLY,
I APPEAR
TO HAVE
SOME PRE-
STIGE IN OUR
SOCIETY.

TO RE-
ITERATE,
I AM A
MAGE.

WHAT
EXACTLY
DOES
"SLEIGH
BEGGY"
MEAN?

PEOPLE
AT THE
AUCTION
HOUSE
KEPT
CALLING
ME THAT,
TOO.

NOW, CHILDREN
WITH MAGICAL
Talent ARE
UNUSUAL, BUT NOT
THAT RARE. SLEIGH
BEGGY, HOWEVER,
ARE NEARLY
UNHEARD OF.
I WAS QUITE
FORTUNATE.

THOSE LIKE
YOU HAVE
THE ABILITY
TO SUMMON
AND BIND ALL
MANNER OF
THINGS.

A
QUEEN
BEE?

AN APT
COMPARI-
SON MIGHT
BE TO A
QUEEN
BEE.

AND FOR
THOSE OF
YOUR KIND
WHO CANNOT
SEE THEM,
THEY BEAR
BOTH GOOD
AND BAD
LUCK.

FAE BEINGS
ARE LIKE
WORKER BEES
WHO FLOCK TO
THE QUEEN--
WHETHER SHE
SEES THEM
OR NOT.

FOR YOUR
KIND, THAT IS
VERY UNUSUAL.
MOST DON'T
EVEN REALIZE
WHAT THEY
ARE DOING.

AND
WHILE
YOU CAN
PERCEIVE
FAIRIES
AND THE
LIKE...



MAGIC OFTEN
REQUIRES
THEIR AID.
THEIR WILLING
ASSISTANCE
WILL BE A
GREAT ASSET
TO YOU.

BUT THEIR
FONDNESS
MEANS
YOU'LL
NEVER
LACK FOR
HELP.



FAE NOTIONS
OF GIFTS
AND FAVORS
AREN'T
ALWAYS IN
A HUMAN'S
BEST
INTERESTS.



BAD
LUCK
TOO...?



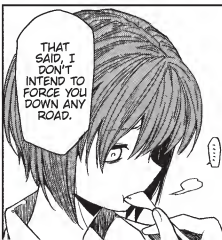
YOU WILL
BE A
MAGNIFI-
CENT
MAGE
ONE DAY.



NOT
REALLY!

BUT YOU
MAY THINK
THINGS OVER.
THE PATH TO
BECOMING A
MAGE IS ONLY
ONE OF MANY.

UM... YOU
BOUGHT
ME, SO
I DON'T
REALLY
GET A SAY,
DO I?



THAT
SAID, I
DON'T
INTEND TO
FORCE YOU
DOWN ANY
ROAD.

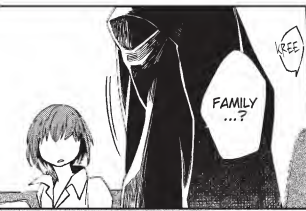


AFTER ALL,
YOU'RE
PRACTICALLY
FAMILY NOW.



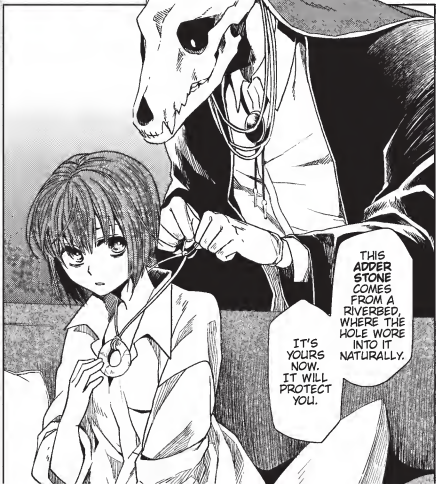
I'LL DO
WHAT I
CAN TO
GUIDE YOU
ON THAT
PATH...

BUT THAT
DOESN'T
MEAN I
WON'T
HELP WITH
OTHER
THINGS. I
WOULDN'T
MIND
SPOILING
YOU A BIT.



KREE

FAMILY
...?



I THINK
THAT'S
ENOUGH
FOR ONE
EVENING.

LET'S
CALL
IT A
NIGHT.

THIS
ADDER
STONE
COMES
FROM A
RIVERBED,
WHERE THE
HOLE WORE
INTO IT
NATURALLY.

IT'S
YOURS
NOW.
IT WILL
PROTECT
YOU.



SNIFF...

THE TEA
HAD THE
SAME
SMELL.
SOME
KIND OF
HERB,
MAYBE?

WHAT A
STRANGE
SCENT.



BOFF

IS HE
REALLY
GOING
TO MAKE
ME HIS
APPRENTICE?
HE'S
NOT FAT-
TENING
ME UP TO
EAT OR
ANY-
THING,
IS HE?



MY OWN
ROOM...
A REAL
BED...!



AND
THERE'S
NO MUST
OR MIL-
DEW...

A REAL
BED
IS SO WON-
DERFUL...



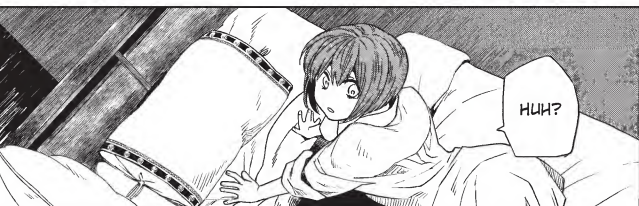
Chise...

Chise.

NO
MORE
THINKING.
I'M JUST
GONNA
SLEEP.



FRESH,
BUT FAINTLY
BITTER. IT'S
A BIT LIKE
A GRASSY
FIELD.



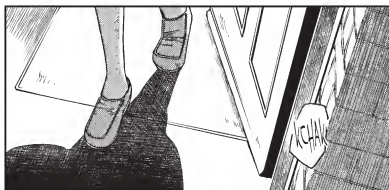


Come on,
sweetie.
Pleeeeeease?



Oh, don't
bother
him! We'll
be back
before he
even knows
we're
gone!

I'LL GO
TELL
ELIAS--



AND IT
WON'T DO
FOR HER
TO BE SO
EASILY
DECEIVED
BY SMALL,
CUTE
THINGS.



AAH,
FOOLISH
CHILD.
SLEIGH
BEGGY
SHOULD NOT
WANDER
ABOUT THE
WOODS AT
NIGHT.





WELL,
THIS
SHOULD
BE A
GOOD
LESSON.



SKFF

Yep!
We leave
sparkle trails
when we fly.
You can see
them, right?

IT'S SO
BRIGHT
OUT
HERE!



HUNH.

Some of us
live alone, and
some live like
humans do--
in pairs with
children.

There are
tons of us!
Some in the
human world,
and even
more in our
kingdom.



We play
in the woods
lots, and go
to and from
the Fairy
Kingdom,
so there're
trails all
over!



IT'S
A SMALL
COUNTRY
WAY EAST
OF HERE--
ACROSS
THE WHOLE
CONTINENT
AND THE
OCEAN.

Japan?



Where
do you
come from,
Chise?

JAPAN.



RELATIVES
HAVE
BEEN
PASSING
ME AROUND.

DAD
BAILED
WHEN I
WAS LITTLE.
FOR ALL
I KNOW,
HE'S DEAD
TOO.

I HAVEN'T
HAD ANY
SINCE
MOM DIED.

And
your
family?



"WE DON'T
WANT YOU."



I
DON'T
KNOW.

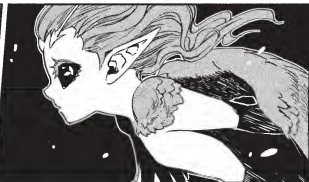
BUT...



Were
they
good to
you?

I
PROBABLY
WOULDN'T
BE HERE
NOW.

IF I'D
LEARNED
TO LIKE
THEM...

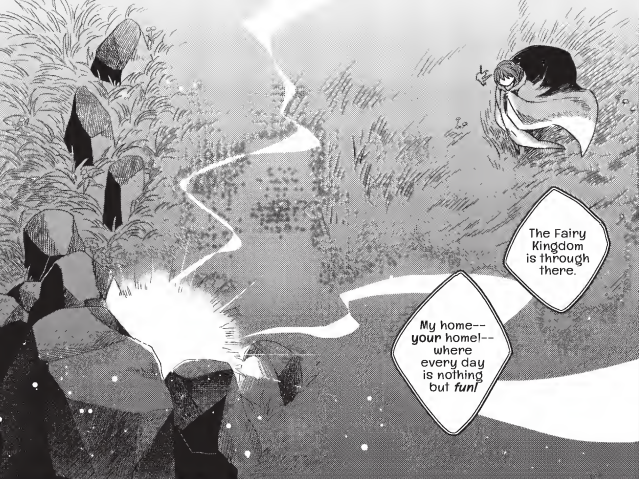


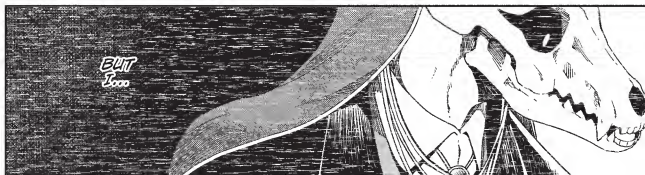
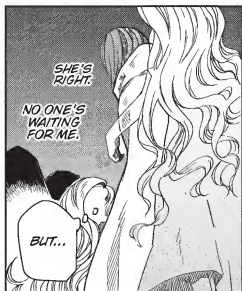
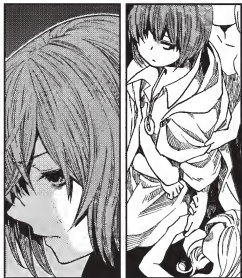
HEY,
UM...

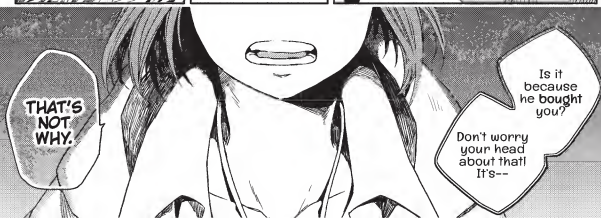
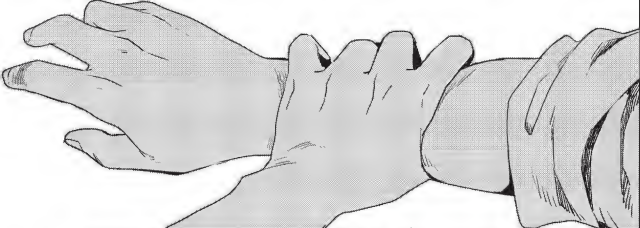
WE'VE
BEEN
WALKING
FOR A
WHILE.















ELIAS
--!



THORN!

HOW DID
YOU FIND
US?



IT WOULD
SEEM MY
LITTLE
PUPPY HAS
LEARNED
WHERE HER
DEN IS.

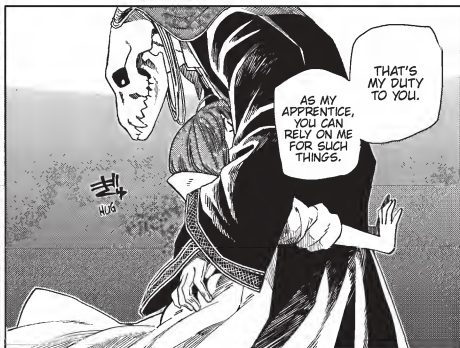
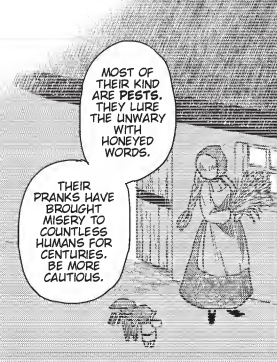


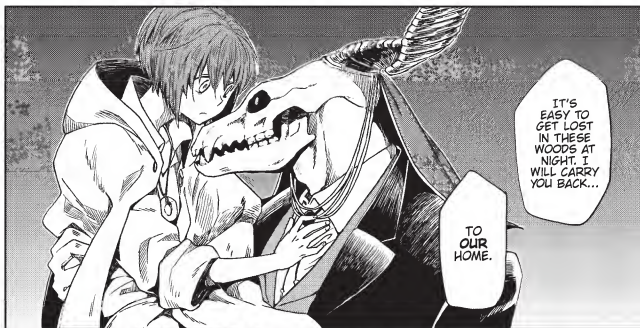
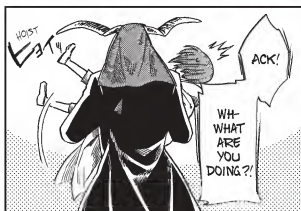
SO THAT'S
WHY...

BESIDES,
WHAT MAGE
WORTH HIS
SALT WOULD
OVERLOOK
A FONT OF
MAGICAL
ENERGY
LIKE THAT
GATE?

WHY,
I PUT
A BELL
ON HER
COLLAR.







ALL
RIGHT.

HUH
...?

OKAY--

Wait a
minute...

WE CAN'T
HAVE MY
FUTURE
WIFE
COVERED
IN SCARS.

ONCE
THERE,
I'LL NEED
TO TAKE
A LOOK
AT THAT
ARM.

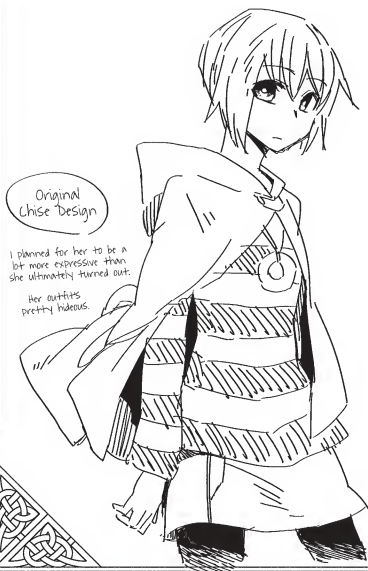
Eep

I BOUGHT
YOU TO
BE MY
APPRENTICE,
AS I SAID...

OH,
HAVEN'T
I MENTIONED
IT?

UM...
WHAT'S
THIS ABOUT
A FUTURE
WIFE?





Original
Chise Design

I planned for her to be a
lot more expressive than
she ultimately turned out.

Her outfits
pretty hideous.





Is she
the one
making
these
clothes
for me?

FIDGET
FIDGET



I
THOUGHT
YOU
WEREN'T
INTERESTED
IN ANY
OF THAT.



WHAT
SORT OF
PERSON
MIGHT
BUY
YOU...?

YOU
WANT
TO
KNOW?

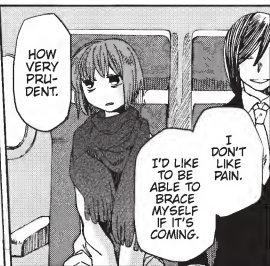


NO ONE
WOULD
SPEND THAT
AMOUNT ON
A DISPOS-
ABLE TOY.

AT
THE SUM
YOU'LL
GO FOR,
NO BUYER
WOULD
ABUSE
YOU.

BUT
NOT TO
WORRY.
YOU
ARE...A
SPECIAL
COMMOD-
ITY.

OH, THAT'S
RIGHT. YOU
SAID YOU
DIDN'T CARE
IF YOU LIVED
OR DIED.



HOW
VERY
PRU-
DENT.

I'D LIKE
TO BE
ABLE TO
BRACE
MYSELF
IF IT'S
COMING.

I
DON'T
LIKE
PAIN.

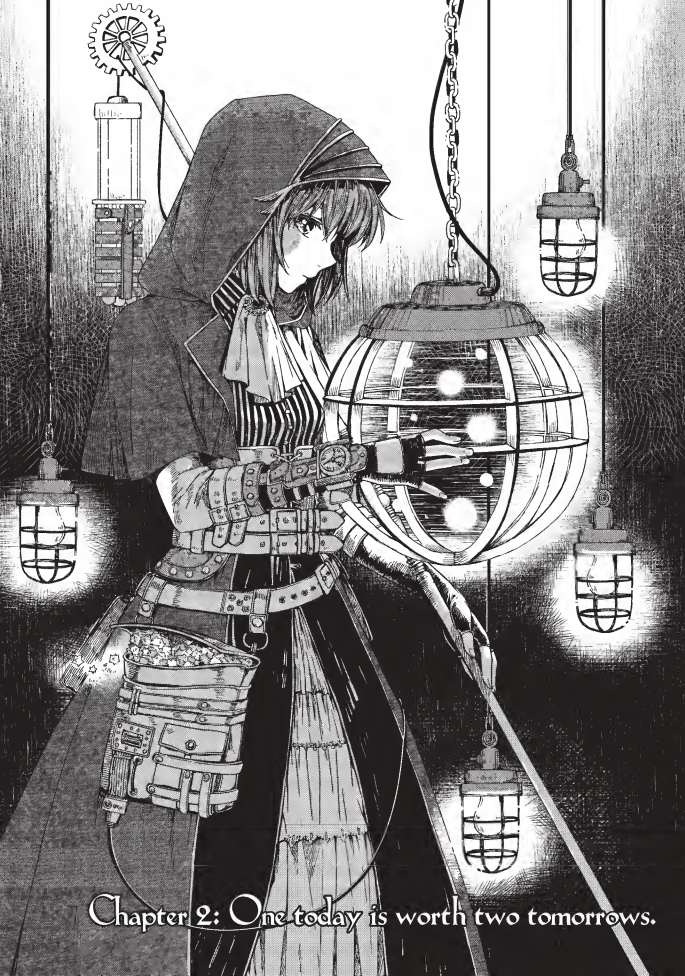


SOON.

OH,
YOU'LL
SEE.

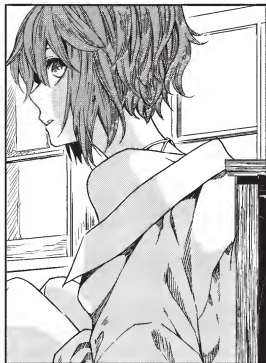
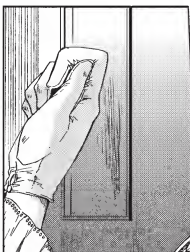
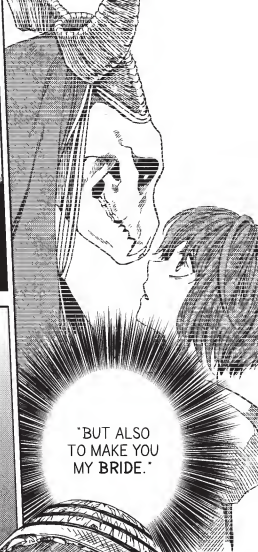
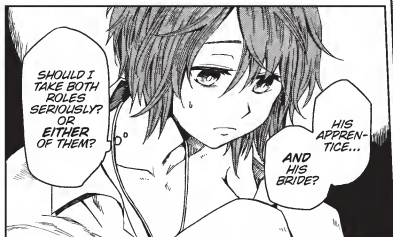


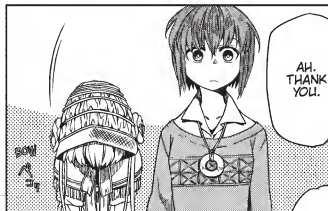
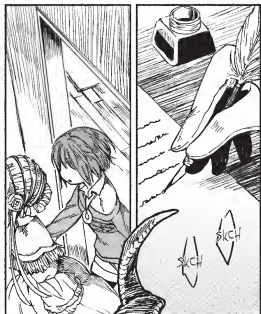
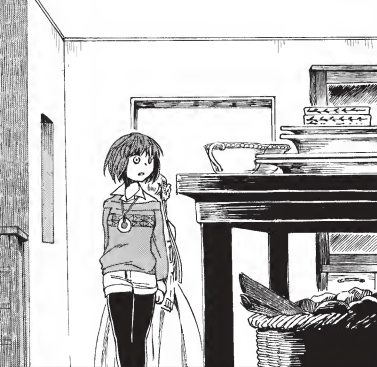
HOW DO
YOU KNOW
SOMEBODY'S
GOING TO
PAY A LOT
FOR ME?



Chapter 2: One today is worth two tomorrows.







AH.
THANK
YOU.



GOOD
MORNING,
ELIAS.

UM...

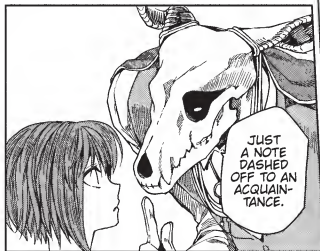
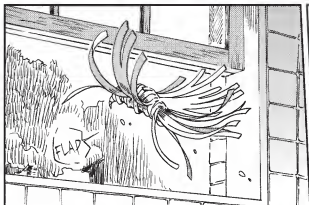
GOOD
MORNING,
CHISE.



SHE
IS THE
"NEIGHBOR"
WHO LIVES
HERE--A
SILKY.

WHO'S
THAT?





RIGHT.

THIS IS THE
MAN WHO
BOUGHT ME--
AND FOR A
RIDICULOUS
AMOUNT OF
MONEY.

BUT HE'S
TAKING CARE
OF ME, SO I
DON'T THINK
HE'S A BAD
GUY...

I REALIZE
THAT YOU
ONLY JUST
WOKE UP...

TWO
DAYS
?!

DO YOU
KNOW
YOU WERE
ASLEEP
FOR TWO
DAYS?

I BARELY
KNOW
ANYTHING
ABOUT HIM.
WHAT KIND
OF PERSON
IS HE? WHY
DOES HE
LOOK THAT
WAY?

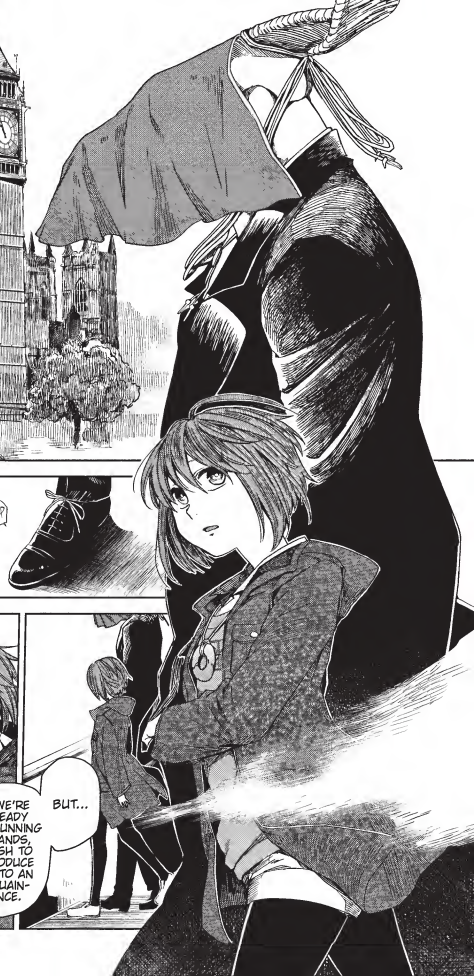
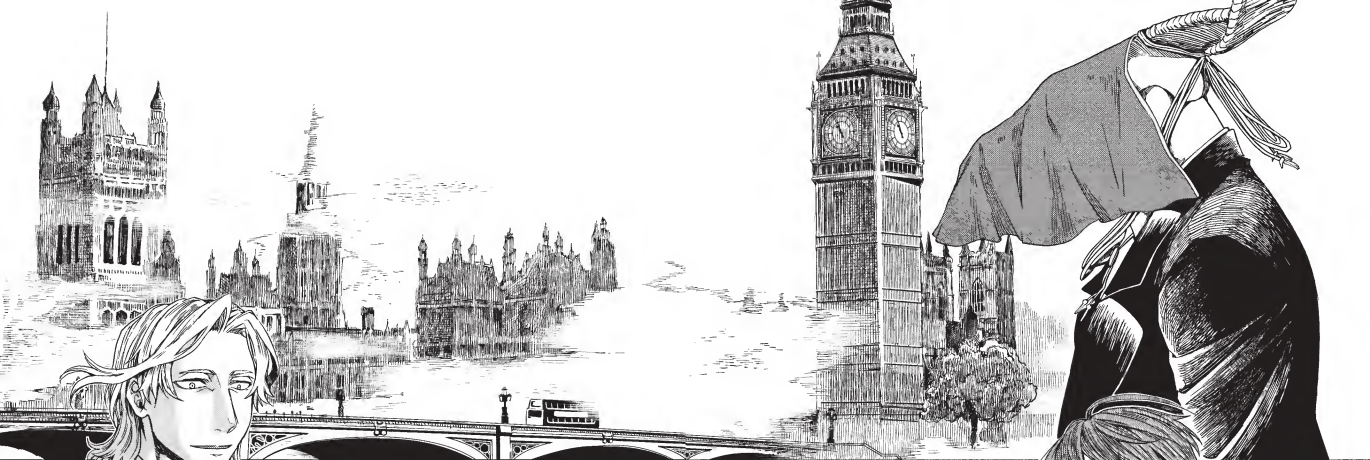
I EXPECT
YOU WERE
EXHAUSTED
FROM
ALL THE
STRESS.

HUH?

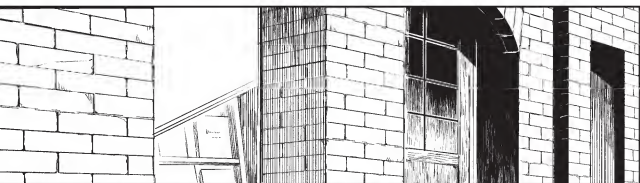
WHAT
I DO
KNOW
IS THAT
HE'S
WEIRD.

REALLY,
REALLY
WEIRD.

BUT I'D
LIKE IT IF
YOU'D GET
READY
FOR OUR
HONEY-
MOON.









WHAT?

THREE
DAYS AGO,
SHE
BECAME MY
APPRENTICE.

YOUR
APPREN-
TICE?!

PAYING
FOR HER IN
ANY WAY
IS UNDER-
HANDED!
COULD YOU
AT LEAST
TRY TO
ACQUIRE
SOME
COMMON
SENSE?!

NOT TO
WORRY.
I PAID
FOR HER
FAIR AND
SQUARE.

CHISE, IS
IT? SHE
SEEMS
PLEASANT
ENOUGH.

YOU DIDN'T
FIND HER
VIA UNDER-
HANDED
MEANS,
DID YOU?

ANY-
THING...
"FUNNY"
...?

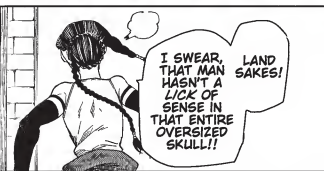
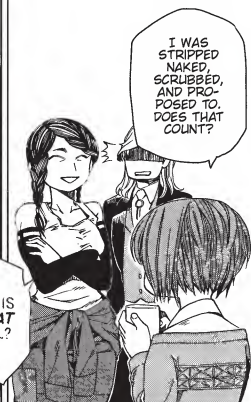
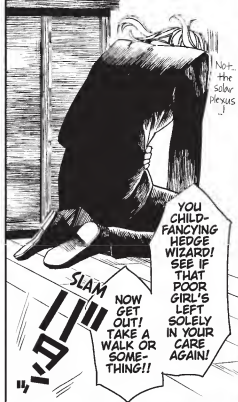
I MOST
CERTAINLY
HAVE NOT!
WHAT DO
YOU TAKE
ME FOR?

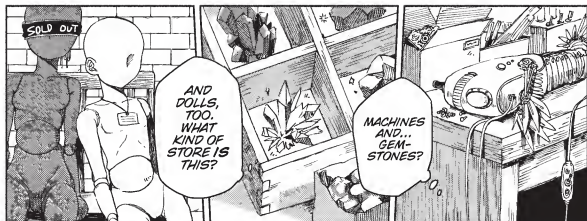
HAS HE
DONE
ANYTHING
FUNNY
TO YOU,
LASS?

A
RECLUSE
LIKE HIM,
BUYING A
PERSON
...?

YOU DO
REALIZE
THAT IF YOU
DON'T DENY
IT QUICKLY, I
COULD BE IN
VERY DEEP
TROUBLE...?

CHISE
...







THE
NAME'S
ANGELICA
PURLEY.

OH, I
SUPPOSE
I HAVEN'T
INTRO-
DUCED
MYSELF.



LOOK AT
ALL THE
FAIRIES!

THEY SEEM
TO BE HAVING
FUN HANGING
OUT ON THE
STONES AND
TOOLS.



AND
WHO
ARE
YOU?

WHAT
KIND OF
STORE
IS THIS,
MA'AM?



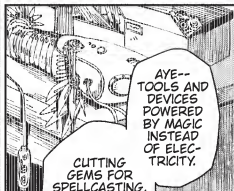
I'M ONE
OF THE
WORLD'S
LAST
MAGES.

I'M AN
ARTIFICER!
I MAKE
MAGUS
CRAFTS.





MAMA?



AYE--
TOOLS AND
DEVICES
POWERED
BY MAGIC
INSTEAD
OF ELEC-
TRICITY.

CUTTING
GEMS FOR
SPELLCASTING,
MAKING
KNIVES FOR
ENCHANT-
MENTS...
I DO IT ALL.



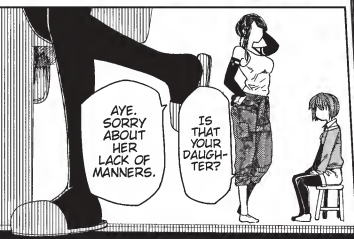
MAGUS
CRAFTS?



BUT,
MAMA, YOU
PROMISED
YOU'D HELP
ME PRACTICE
TODAY!

ANOTHER
TIME. RUN
ON BACK
TO YOUR
ROOM,
NOW.

SORRY,
SWEET-
PEA, BUT
THERE'S A
CHANGE OF
PLANS. BE
GOOD NOW,
OKAY?



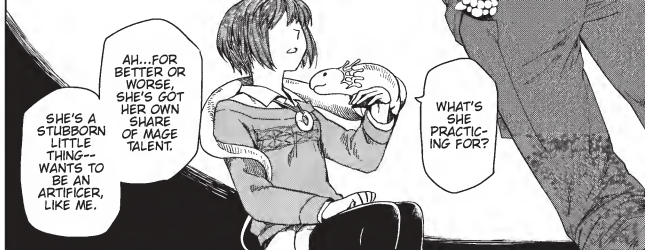
AYE.
SORRY
ABOUT
HER
LACK OF
MANNERS.

IS
THAT
YOUR
DAUGH-
TER?



ARE
THERE
CUSTOM-
ERS?

ALTHEA!



SHE'S A
STUBBORN
LITTLE
THING--
WANTS TO
BE AN
ARTIFICER,
LIKE ME.

AH...FOR
BETTER OR
WORSE,
SHE'S GOT
HER OWN
SHARE OF
MAGE
TALENT.

WHAT'S
SHE
PRACTIC-
ING FOR?



UM...

I KEEP
HEARING
PEOPLE
TALK
ABOUT
"MAGE
TALENT."
WHAT
IS IT?



BUT THE
TIMES BEING
WHAT THEY
ARE, I WISH
SHE'D SET
HER SIGHTS
ON A MORE
NORMAL
CAREER.



MAGIC,
THOUGH,
IS THE
PROVINCE
OF MAGES.

THEY
MAKE THINGS
HAPPEN BY
BORROWING
POWER
FROM FAIRIES,
SPIRITS,
GHOSTS, OR
DEMONS. IT
SEEMS MORE
LIKE A
MIRACLE.

WELL, AS
YOU MIGHT
GUESS,
ALCHEMY'S
THE TYPE
OF SCIENCE
USED BY
ALCHE-
MISTS.



FIRST OFF,
ARE YOU
FAMILAR
WITH THE
DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN
ALCHEMY
AND MAGIC?



WHAT,
HASN'T
ELIAS
TOLD
YOU
ABOUT
IT YET?

HE NEVER
WAS ANY
GOOD AT
CLEAR
EXPLANA-
TIONS.

AND WE
INTERFERE
WITH THOSE
LAWS, OR
BREAK THEM
OUTRIGHT,
TO GET THE
SAME KINDS
OF RESULTS.

BUT MAGES
LIKE US, WE
USE THE
POWER WE
BORROW...

A...
MIRACLE
...?

THAT
PROCESS
IS
ALCHEMY.

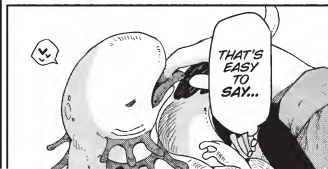
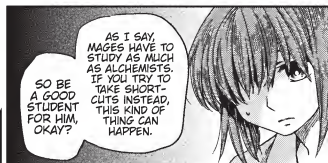
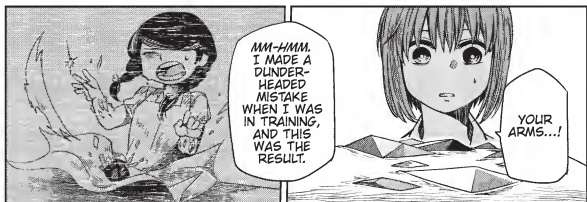
SEE,
THE WORLD
FOLLOWS
NATURAL LAWS.
ALCHEMISTS
STUDY THOSE
LAWS AND
LEARN TO
MANIPULATE
THEM.

IT'S LIKE
A COMPUTER
PROGRAM: MAKE
THIS CHANGE,
GET THAT RESULT.
ALCHEMISTS
TWEAK OR
TEMPORARILY
REWRITE THE
NATURAL LAWS
FOR WHAT
THEY WANT.

AND IF
YOU TRY
SOMETHING
TOO BIG
AND GET IN
OVER YOUR
HEAD...

NEARLY
ANYTHING'S
POSSIBLE,
BUT YOU
HAVE TO
STUDY AS
HARD AS
ALCHEMISTS
DO.

SOUNDS
LIKE
MAGIC'S
THE EASY
WAY,
HUH?
BUT IT'S
NOT. WE'RE
MANIPULAT-
ING SOMEONE
ELSE'S
POWER, AND
THAT MAKES
IT HARD TO
WORK WITH
ANY KIND OF
PRECISION.





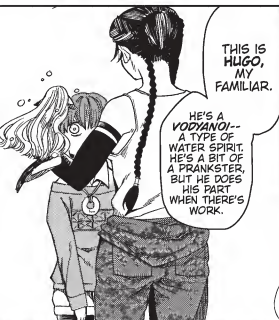
IF HE'S
KEEPING YOU
ON, THAT
MEANS YOU'VE
GOT THE
POTENTIAL.



WANT TO
GIVE IT
A TRY?



UM...
DO YOU
REALLY
THINK I'LL
BE ABLE
TO USE
MAGIC
SOMEDAY?



THIS IS
HUGO,
MY
FAMILIAR.

HE'S A
VODYANOI--
A TYPE OF
WATER SPIRIT.
HE'S A BIT OF
A PRANKSTER,
BUT HE DOES
HIS PART
WHEN THERE'S
WORK.



WE'RE
GOING TO TRY
SOME
MAGIC.

HUH?!



Hey
there,
little
robin!

Glad to
meetchal
Now, Angelica
here's my one
and only, so I
can't be your
new bestie,
but I'll lend
you a hand.



CLIP IT
IN YOUR
HANDS...
AND
ENVISION
THE SHAPE
YOU WANT IT
TO TAKE.



THIS HERE'S
A STONE
ALCHEMISTS
USE FOR
PRACTICE.
THEY'D USUALLY
DRAW A MATRIX
TO PUT IT IN,
BUT WE'LL
SKIP THAT.



B-BUT
I'VE NEVER
DONE
ANYTHING
LIKE THIS
BEFORE!

FIRST
TIME FOR
EVERY-
THING!



FLOW-
ERS...

MM, HOW
ABOUT YOUR
FAVORITE
FLOWER?
PICTURE THAT
CLEARLY IN
YOUR MIND.

ENVISION
IT?



THINK OF
IT THIS WAY:
AIR IS JUST
LIQUID HEATED
INTO VAPOR,
AND YOUR WILL
IS PRESSURE.
BETWEEN THEM,
YOU MAKE A
CRYSTAL
FORM.

TO CREATE IT,
LIQUID WAS
POURED INTO
A MOLD AND
THEN PUT UN-
DER MASSIVE
PRESSURE
UNTIL IT
CRYSTALLIZED.



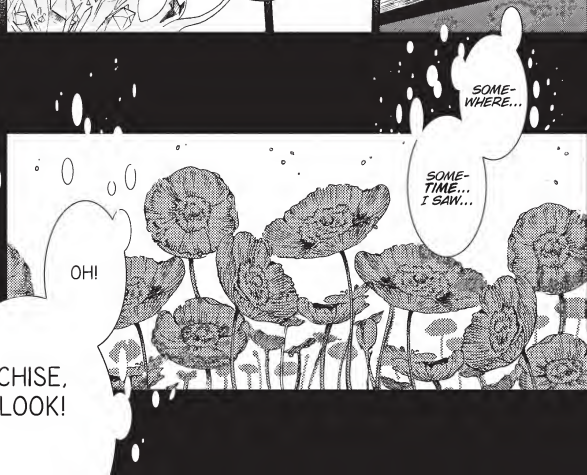
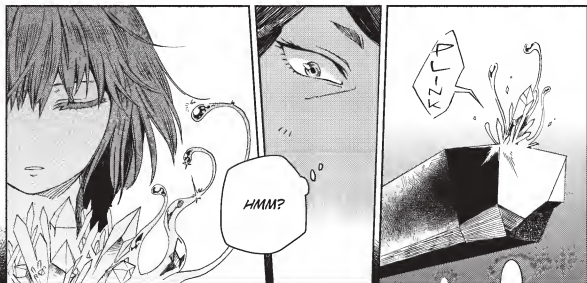
THIS
GEM IS AN
ARTIFICIAL
CRYSTAL.



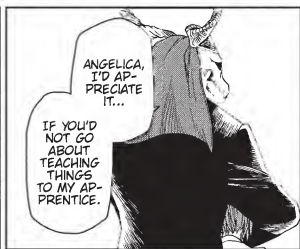
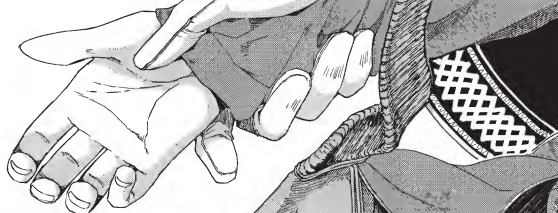
UGH,
SHE AND
ELIAS ARE
BOTH SO
ABRUPT
ABOUT
EVERY-
THING...

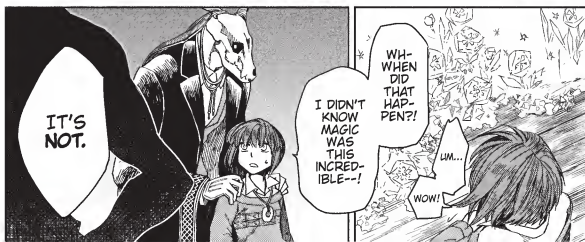
GUESS
I'LL JUST
HAVE
TO TRY
AND SEE.

00











THEY SOAK
UP THE
ENERGY IN
THE WORLD
AROUND THEM
AND STORE
IT IN THEIR
BODIES AS
MAGIC.

HOW'S
THAT?

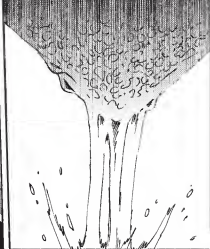
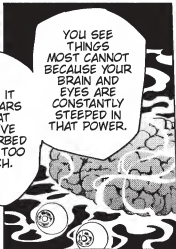


SLEIGH
BEGGY
ARE LIKE
LIVING
SPONGES.

THERE'S
SO MUCH
MAGIC STORED
WITHIN YOU
THAT YOU'RE
INCAPABLE OF
EXPENDING
ONLY A LITTLE
AT A TIME.

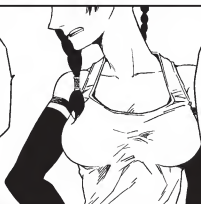
BUT IT
APPEARS
THAT
YOU'VE
ABSORBED
A BIT TOO
MUCH.

YOU SEE
THINGS
MOST CANNOT
BECAUSE YOUR
BRAIN AND
EYES ARE
CONSTANTLY
STEEDPED IN
THAT POWER.



Yikes!

HUGO!
WHY
DIDN'T
YOU
WARN
ME?



I WAS
ABLE TO
TRANSPORT
US HOME FROM
THE AUCTION
HOUSE IN ONLY
ONE JUMP
BECAUSE I
TAPPED INTO
YOUR MAGIC
INSTEAD
OF USING
MINE.

FOR NOW,
JUST
THINK OF
YOURSELF AS
UNSKILLED
AT THE
SUBTLER
THINGS.

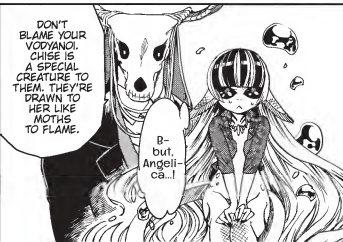
OF
COURSE
NOT.
IT'S AS
NATURAL
TO YOU AS
BREATH-
ING.

BUT I
DON'T FEEL
LIKE I'M
ABSORBING
ANYTHING...



DON'T
BLAME YOUR
VOYANOI.
CHISE IS
A SPECIAL
CREATURE TO
THEM. THEY'RE
DRAWN TO
HER LIKE
MOTHS
TO FLAME.

B-
but,
Angeli-
ca...!



RUMPLE

THERE,
THERE,
LASS,
YOU DON'T
NEED TO
APOLOGIZE.

I...
I'M
SORRY
FOR
MAKING
SUCH A
MESS...

WHAT
GOOD IS
A MASTER
WHO
DOESN'T
TEACH HIS
APPRENTICE
ANY-
THING?!

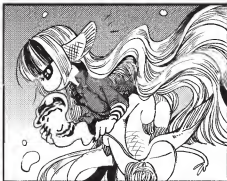
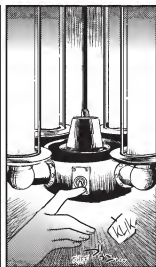
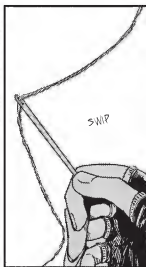
GOOD-
FOR-
NOTHING
...?

IT WAS
ENTIRELY HIS
FAULT! IT
WOULDN'T HAVE
HAPPENED
IF THAT
BONE-SKULLED
GOOD-FOR-
NOTHING HAD
SPOKEN UP!

WHAT,
AINS-
WORTH--?

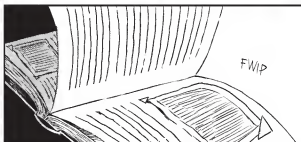
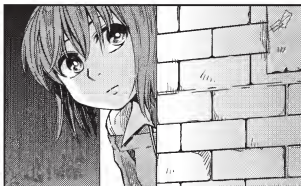
LASS,
COULD YOU
FETCH THE
BROOM
FROM THE
CLOSET IN
THE NEXT
ROOM?





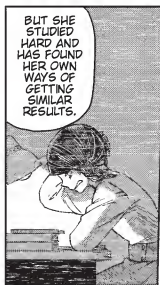


AH, IS
SHE
FINISHED?



HAVE
YOU
KNOWN
HER FOR
LONG?

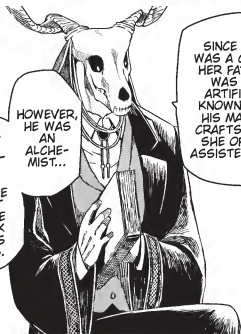
NOT YET.
SHE SAID
SHE HAD
TO MAKE
SOME
ADJUST-
MENTS
FIRST.



BUT SHE
STUDIED
HARD AND
HAS FOUND
HER OWN
WAYS OF
GETTING
SIMILAR
RESULTS.



AND HER
TALENTS
LAY ELSE-
WHERE.
AS A
MAGE, SHE
COULDN'T
REPLICATE
HIS WORK
USING HIS
METHODS.

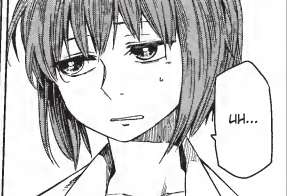


HOWEVER,
HE WAS
AN
ALCHE-
MIST...

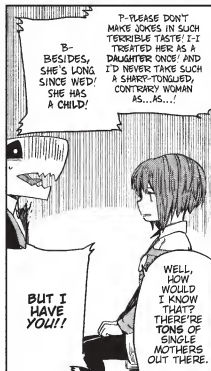
SINCE SHE
WAS A CHILD.
HER FATHER
WAS AN
ARTIFICER
KNOWN FOR
HIS MAGUS
CRAFTS, AND
SHE OFTEN
ASSISTED HIM.



A-AND
I WAS WON-
DER-
ING...



UH...

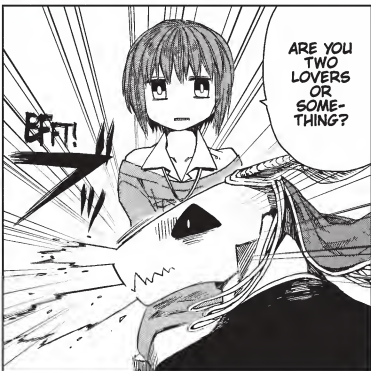


B-
BESIDES,
SHE'S LONG
SINCE WED!
SHE HAS
A CHILD!

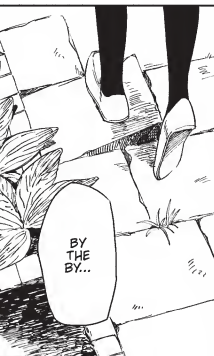
P-PLEASE DON'T
MAKE JOKES IN SUCH
TERRIBLE TASTE! I-I
TREATED HER AS A
DAUGHTER ONCE! AND
I'D NEVER TAKE SUCH
A SHARP-TONGUED,
CONTRARY WOMAN
AS...AS...

BUT I
HAVE
YOU!!

WELL,
HOW
WOULD
I KNOW
THAT?
THERE'RE
TONS OF
SINGLE
MOTHERS
OUT THERE.



ARE YOU
TWO
LOVERS
OR
SOME-
THING?



BY
THE
BY...

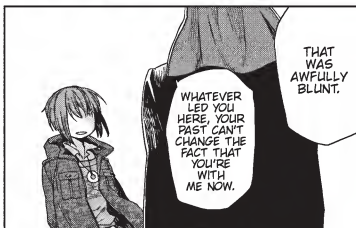
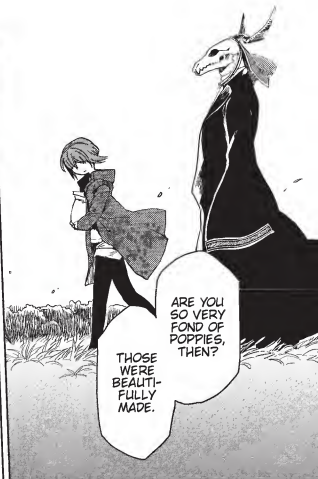
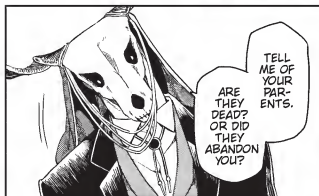


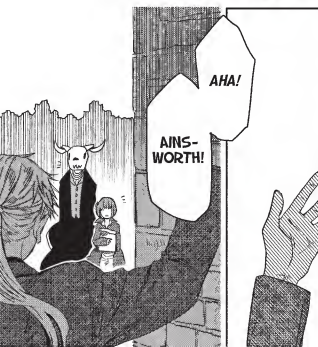
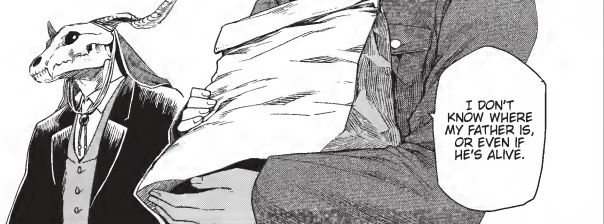
SHUT
UP!!
BOTH
OF
YOU!!!

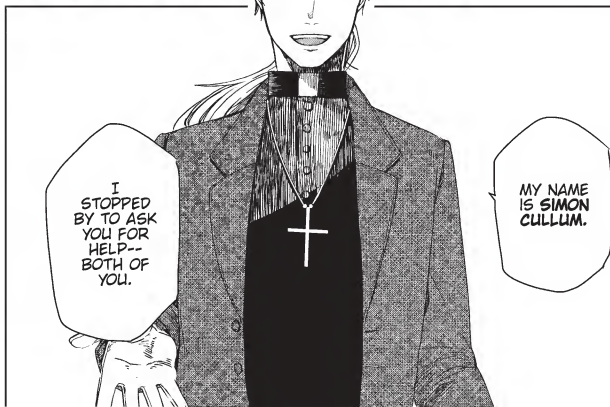
WHY
MUST
YOU
TWIST
THE
KNIFE?!

IS SHE
YOUR
MISTRESS,
THEN?

OH,
SO YOU
WEREN'T
JOKING?









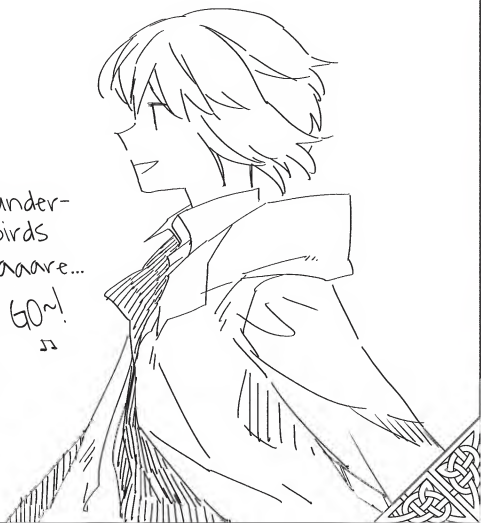
They look similar because
Elias used Simon's face as
a model for his own.

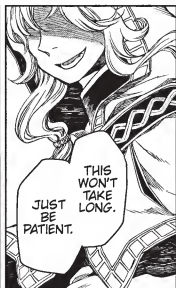
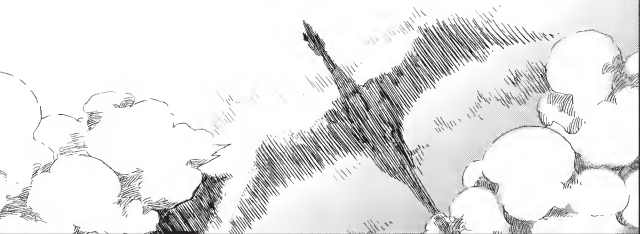
Thunder-
birds
aaaaare...

GO~!
♪

How do
you know
of that?

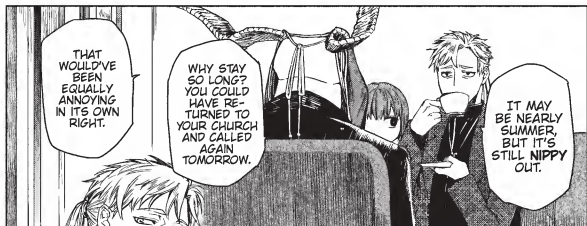
Ⓔ





Chapter 3:
The scale distinguishes not
between gold and lead.

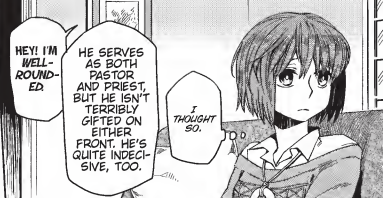






AND
SURE
ENOUGH,
THEY
DON'T.

ELIAS
IS
BEING
ESPE-
CIALLY
PRICKLY.



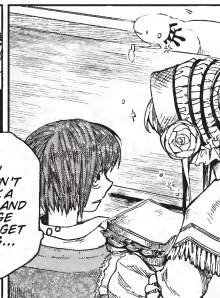
HEY! I'M
WELL-
ROUND-
ED.

HE SERVES
AS BOTH
PASTOR
AND PRIEST,
BUT HE ISN'T
TERRIBLY
GIFTED ON
EITHER
FRONT. HE'S
QUITE INDECI-
SIVE, TOO.

I
THOUGHT
SO.



YOU
WOULDN'T
THINK A
PRIEST AND
A MAGE
WOULD GET
ALONG...

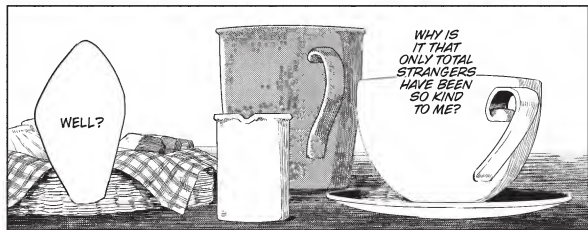


YOU'VE
BEEN
THROUGH
SOME
DIFFICULT
TIMES. YOU'VE
DONE WELL,
GETTING
THIS FAR.

I THINK
I CAN
SEE
WHAT'S
HAPPENED.



CHISE...





PAYBACK
FOR THE
TROUBLE
YOU'RE
CAUSING
ME.



THREE?

THAT'S
QUITE A
FEW.



SETTING
ASIDE THE
OTHER
ALCHEMISTS
FOR THE
MOMENT,
YOUR RECENT
BEHAVIOR
IS NOT
INSIGNIFICANT.



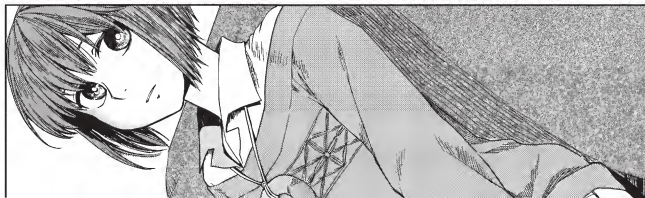
THERE
ARE THREE
MATTERS
WE CAN'T
HANDLE,
FOR
VARIOUS
REASONS.

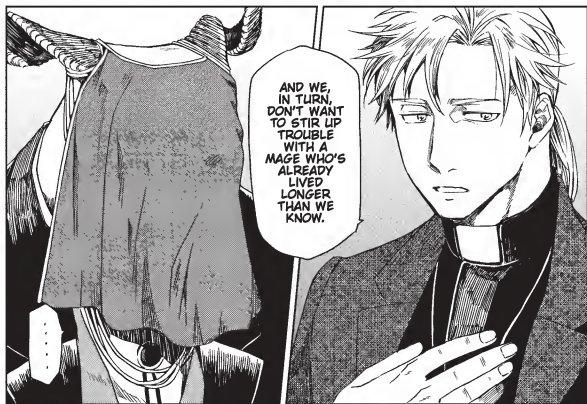
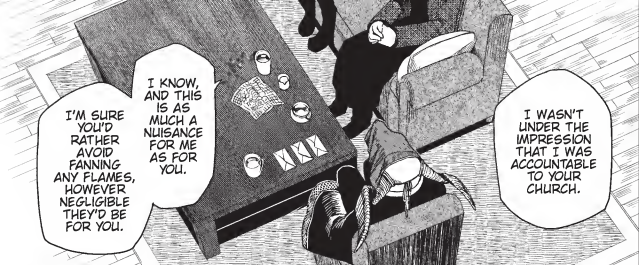
BUT I
DOUBT
THEY'LL
PROVE
CHALLENG-
ING FOR
YOU.

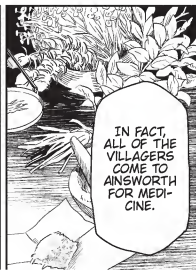
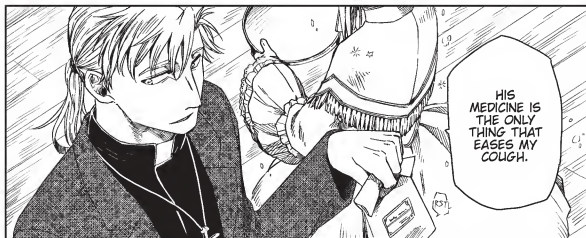


THE OTHER
INCIDENTS WERE
SMALL ENOUGH
TO GLOSS
OVER. BUT I
CAN'T AVOID
REPORTING
THIS TO MY
SUPERIORS.

YOU'VE
BEEN
QUIET FOR
DECADES,
AND NOW
YOU
SUDDENLY
TAKE AN
APPRENTICE?









LEARN
WELL,
OKAY?

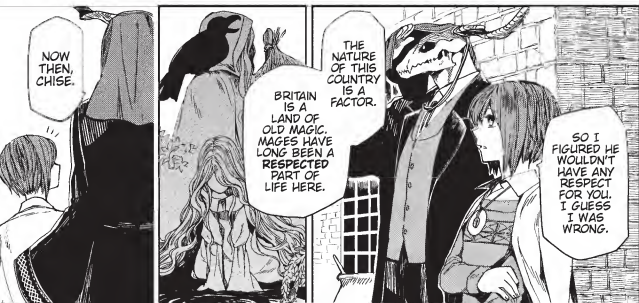
A MAGE'S
MEDICINES
ARE EFFECT-
TIVE AND
EASY ON
THE BODY.



STUDYING
MAGIC INCLUDES
LEARNING TO
MAKE MEDICINE.
IF YOU MAKE
IT FOLLOWING
THE LAWS OF
THE MYSTIC
THEY BECOME
PANACEA.



BUT...
HE'S A
PRIEST.

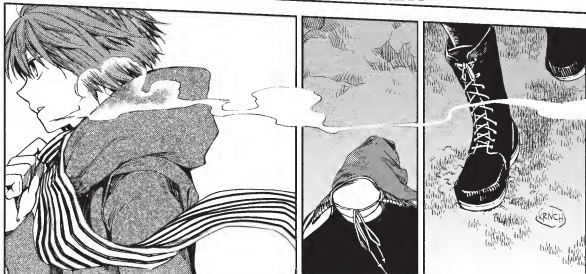
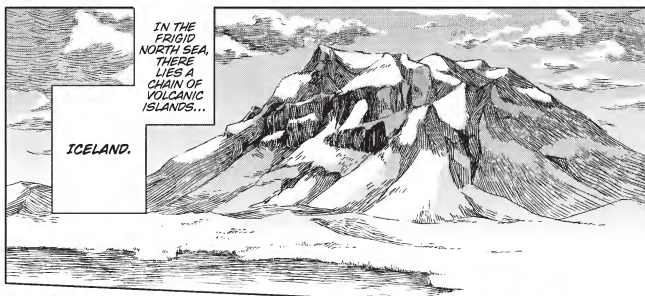


NOW
THEN,
CHISE.

BRITAIN
IS A
LAND OF
OLD MAGIC.
MAGES HAVE
LONG BEEN A
RESPECTED
PART OF
LIFE HERE.

THE
NATURE
OF THIS
COUNTRY
IS A
FACTOR.

SO I
FIGURED
HE WOULDN'T
HAVE ANY
RESPECT
FOR YOU.
I GUESS
I WAS
WRONG.





THE
DRAGONS
HAVE
GROWN
MORE
ACTIVE
LATELY.

WE'VE
BEEN
ASKED TO
LOOK IN
ON THEM.

GIVEN THE
COUNTRY'S
REMOTE
LOCATION
AND SPARSE
POPULATION,
IT'S THE
PERFECT
PLACE.

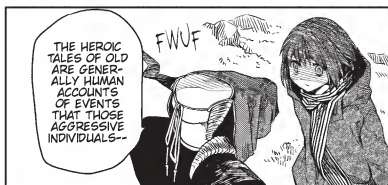
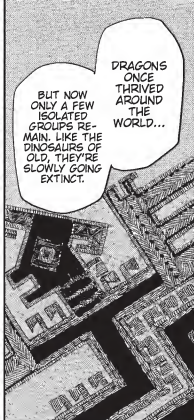
BOTH
MAGIC AND
ALCHEMY
HAVE BEEN
USED TO
HIDE IT FROM
NORMAL
HUMANS' EYES.

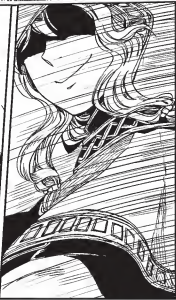
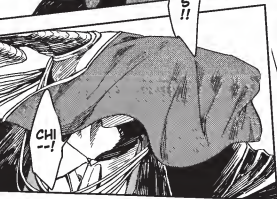
DRAG-
ONS?

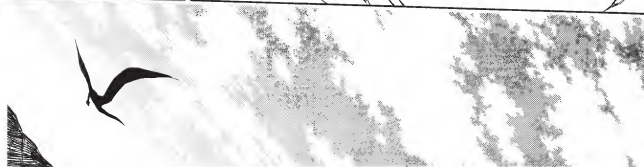
INDEED.



THEY
HAVE AN
AERIE IN
ICELAND.

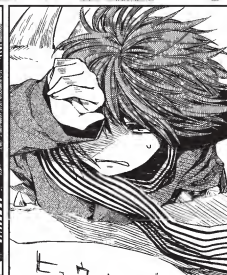




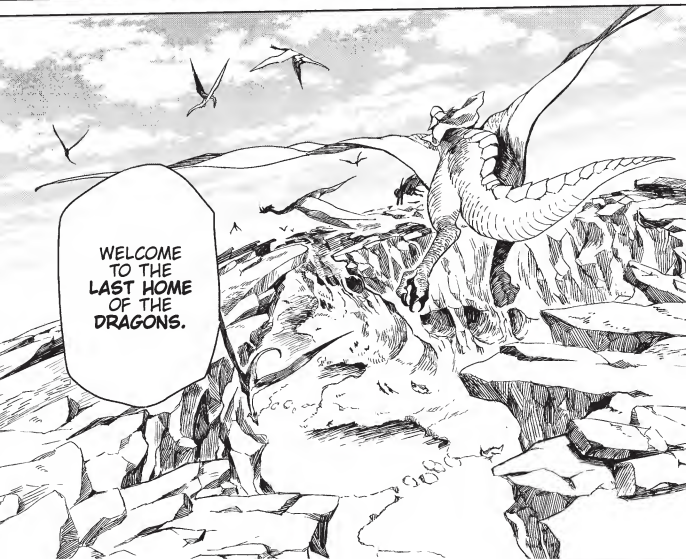


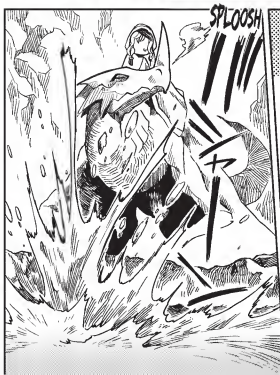
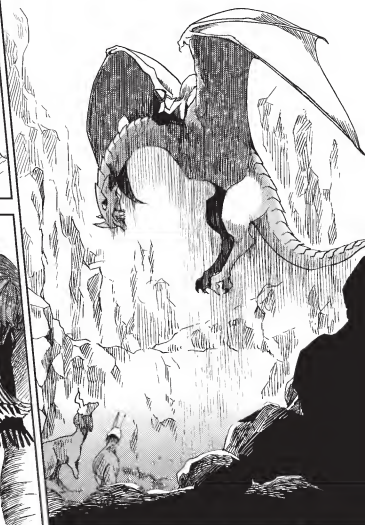
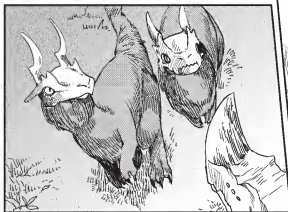
HA!
GUESS
HE'S
STILL A
GREEN-
HORN...

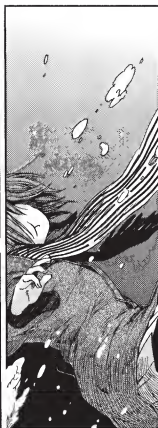
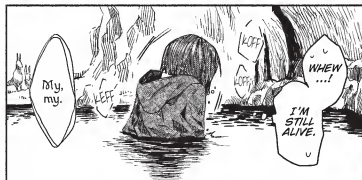
ESPE-
CIALY IF
HE CAN'T
KEEP
HOLD
OF ONE
APPREN-
TICE!



スウウウ
5W0000

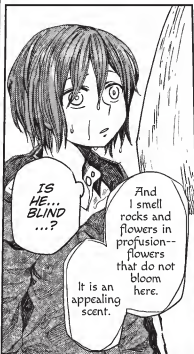








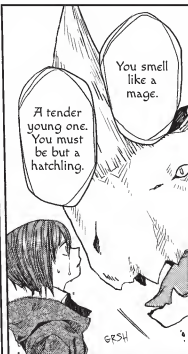
AND
HIS
BACK...



IS
HE...
BLIND
...?

It is an
appealing
scent.

And I smell
rocks and
flowers in
profusion--
flowers that do not
bloom
here.



You smell
like a
mage.

A tender
young one.
You must
be but a
hatchling.

GRSH



HE'S COVERED
IN MOSS AND
LICHEN, LIKE
HE'S A BIG
ROCK.



THEY
ARE BOTH
FATHER AND
MOTHER TO
THE DEEP
FOREST.
FRESH LIFE
SPRINGS
FROM THEIR
DECAYING
BODIES.



HIS KIND
ARE UIR
ARACH--
EARTH
DRAGONS.



HUH?
HOW
DO YOU
KNOW
WHO I
AM?



THEIR
GOSSIP
IS QUITE
LITERALLY
AS SWIFT
AS THE
WIND.

THE ARIELS
WERE ALL
ATWITTER
WITH THE
NEWS THAT
THORN HAD
FINALLY
TAKEN AN
APPRENTICE.



MY APOLO-
GIES
FOR THE
ROUGH
GREET-
ING.

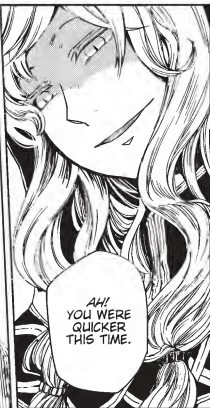
WELCOME
TO THE
LAND
OF THE
DRAGONS,
THORN'S
CHILD.



HOW LONG
WILL YOU
HIDE IN HER
SHADOW,
THORN? OR
NO, PARDON
ME...

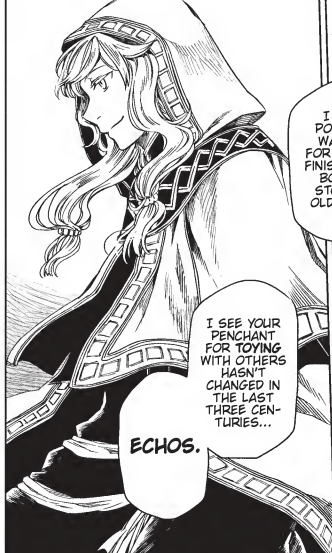
AINS-
WORTH?

SLSSSS



AH!
YOU WERE
QUICKER
THIS TIME.

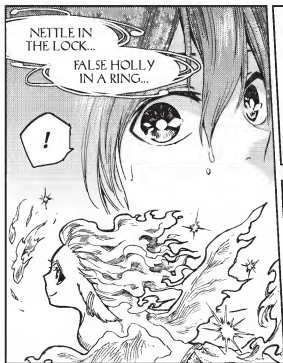
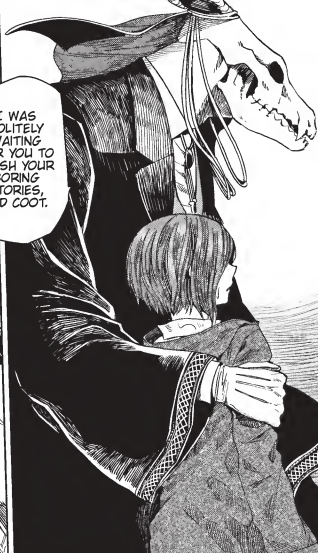




I WAS
POLITELY
WAITING
FOR YOU TO
FINISH YOUR
BORING
STORIES,
OLD COOT.

I SEE YOUR
PENCHANT
FOR TOYING
WITH OTHERS
HASN'T
CHANGED IN
THE LAST
THREE CEN-
TURIES...

ECHOS.



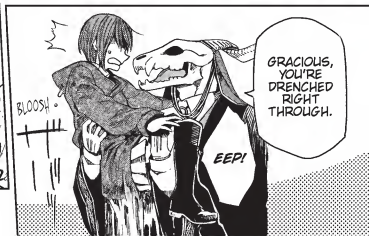
NETTLE IN
THE LOCK...

FALSE HOLLY
IN A RING...

!



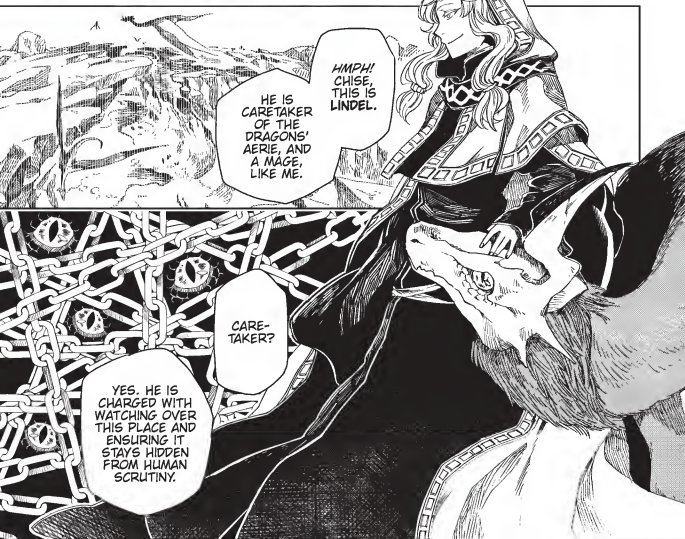
ELIAS...



GRACIOUS,
YOU'RE
DRENCHED
RIGHT
THROUGH.

EEP!

BLOOSH.





Hey!
Hey--!



REAL-
LYP!

DON'T BE
FOOLED BY HIS
APPEARANCE
OR CHILDISH
PRANKS. HE'S
EVEN OLDER
THAN I AM.

HEY



THOSE
ARE
DRAGON
CHICKS.

Yeah!
Play!

Let's
play!

PEEP
PEEP



HM?

Done
talking
yet? We
wanna
play!



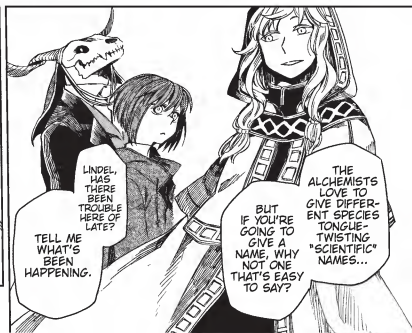
THE
SLOWER,
STOCKIER
ONE IS
ANOTHER
WIL.

THE WINGED
ONE IS A
GAOTH ARACH,
AND THAT'S
A BEANNA AT
YOUR FEET--
WIND AND HILL
DRAGONS.



CHISE,
BE A
DEAR AND
PLAY WITH
THEM,
WOULD
YOU?

IS THAT LOT
ALL WORKED
UP OVER
NOTHING
AGAIN? PREY'S
BEEN SCARCE,
SO SOME
DRAGONS
ARE HUNTING
FURTHER
AFIELD.
THAT'S ALL.



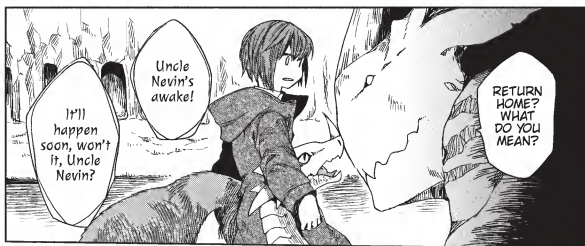
TELL ME
WHAT'S
BEEN
HAPPENING.

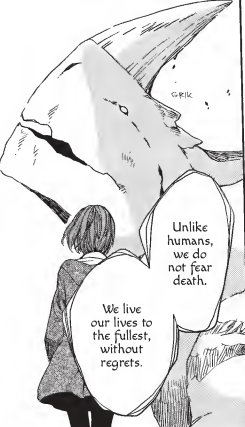
LINDEL,
HAS
THERE
BEEN
TROUBLE
HERE OF
LATE?

BUT
IF YOU'RE
GOING TO
GIVE A
NAME, WHY
NOT ONE
THAT'S EASY
TO SAY?

THE
ALCHEMISTS
LOVE TO
GIVE DIFFER-
ENT SPECIES
TONGUE-
TWISTING
"SCIENTIFIC"
NAMES...







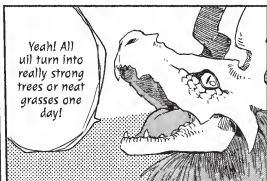
Unlike humans, we do not fear death.

We live our lives to the fullest, without regrets.



"THEY ARE BOTH FATHER AND MOTHER TO THE DEEP FOREST. FRESH LIFE SPRINGS FROM THEIR DECAYING BODIES."

WHEN YOU DIE...? THEN--



Yeah! All uil turn into really strong trees or neat grasses one day!



We're all gonna turn into something awesome when we die! Like trees or rocks or moss!

Yeah!



IT...

IT ISN'T GOING TO HURT, IS IT?



You are a kind child.





We understand
that death comes
to all living things
in time, without
exception.

We
dragons
fear
nothing.



And a
long one,
for a
dragon.

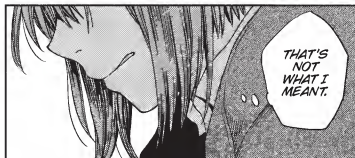
I have
lived a
full life.



And
all will
know the
loneliness
of death.



All things
taste the
joys and
sorrows
of life...



THAT'S
NOT
WHAT I
MEANT.



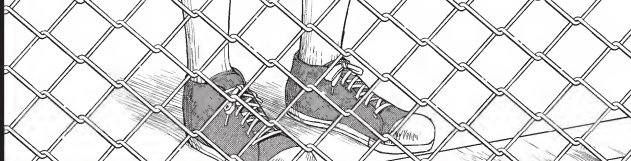
I'M NOT
GRIEVING...
I CAN'T.

BUT...



There is
no need
for you to
grieve.

The new
age belongs
to the new
generation.



The living
should not
envy the
dead.

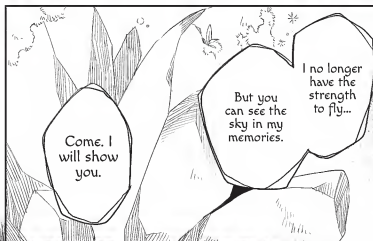


W-WAIT...

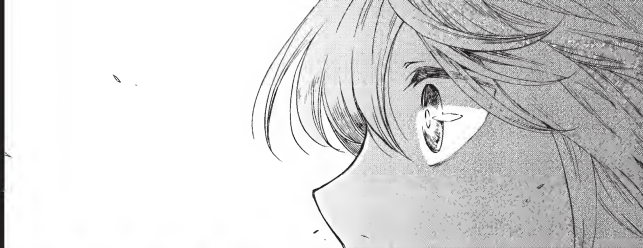
ARE YOU...
SEEING MY
MEMO-
RIES...?

Had he
not met you, I
expect he would
not have known
for a long, long
time who to
take as his
apprentice.

It's good
that you
chose not
to "fly" that
day, without
wings.

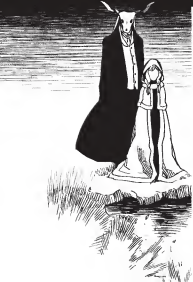






My kind
have abandoned the
sky...

But we
remain
fated to live
beneath
it.



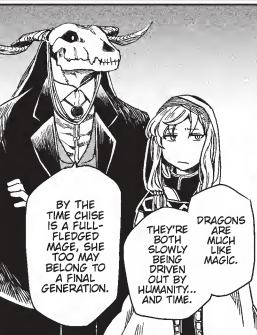
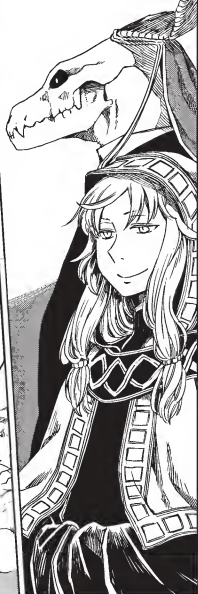
Your name
contains
the word
"bird."

You too
should live
and soar
under this
sky.



HE'S
SHARING
IT WITH
CHISE.

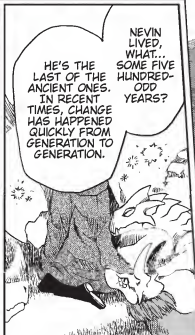
NEVIN
IS HAVING
HIS LAST
DREAM,
AND...



BY THE
TIME CHISE
IS A FULL-
FLEDGED
MAGE, SHE
TOO MAY
BELONG TO
A FINAL
GENERATION.

DRAGONS
ARE
MUCH
LIKE
MAGIC.

THEY'RE
BOTH
SLOWLY
BEING
DRIVEN
OUT BY
HUMANITY...
AND TIME.



HE'S THE
LAST OF THE
ANCIENT ONES.
IN RECENT
TIMES, CHANGE
HAS HAPPENED
QUICKLY FROM
GENERATION TO
GENERATION.

NEVIN
LIVED,
WHAT...
SOME FIVE
HUNDRED-
ODD
YEARS?



IF SHE
MAKES
IT THAT
LONG, OF
COURSE.

I HOPE
YOUR
SLEIGH
BEGGY
GROWS
HALE AND
HEALTHY,
OLD FRIEND.



Thank
you.

With you
here, I was
able to fly
one last
time.



!
A
TREE
...!



GRW



You did.
The magic you
harbor made
my last dream
unusually
vivid.

BUT...
I DIDN'T
DO ANY-
THING...



I'm told it
will bear
beautiful white
blossoms in
springtime.



Great trees
don't grow
easily in this
land, but with
my body for
its seedbed, I'm
sure this one
will be tall
and mighty.

Not long
ago, Lindel
planted a
small seed
on my
body.

FWISH...

FWISH

Come back
someday...
and take
one of my
branches...

for it.

Then you
will need
a wand.

You'll be
a mage
one day,
won't
you?

Good
night...

Little
mage...

FWOOO...





WELCOME
BACK,
CHISE.



WAS
NEVIN'S
SKY
BEAUTIFUL?



FWSH...



THIS IS
A LINDEN
TREE. IT
WILL HAVE
EXQUISITE
LITTLE
WHITE
FLOWERS.



YOU
SAW A
VERY
RARE
THING
TODAY.

NOT MANY
WITNESS A
DRAGON'S
RETURN TO
THE EARTH.



YEAH.
IT
WAS...

REALLY
LOVELY.



WHEN THE
TIME COMES,
CHISE, LET US
DO AS NEVIN
SUGGESTED
AND COME
TAKE A
BRANCH FOR
YOUR WAND.



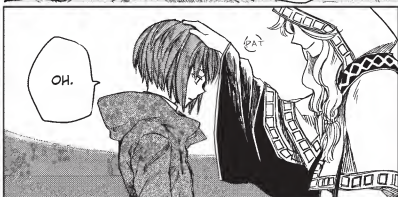
THERE'S
NO CAUSE
FOR
SORROW,
CHISE.



TO PASS
ON QUIETLY
AND BECOME
HOME TO
NEW LIFE.

NATURE
TOOK ITS
COURSE.

FROM
THE EARLIEST
OF DAYS,
DRAGONS
HAVE
DESIRED...

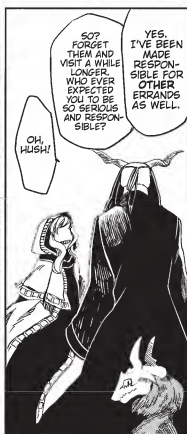


OH.



IT WAS
JUST NATURE...

TAKING
ITS
COURSE.



SO? FORGET
THEM AND
VISIT A WHILE
LONGER.
WHO EVER
EXPECTED
YOU TO BE
SO SERIOUS
AND RESPON-
SIBLE?

OH, HUSH!

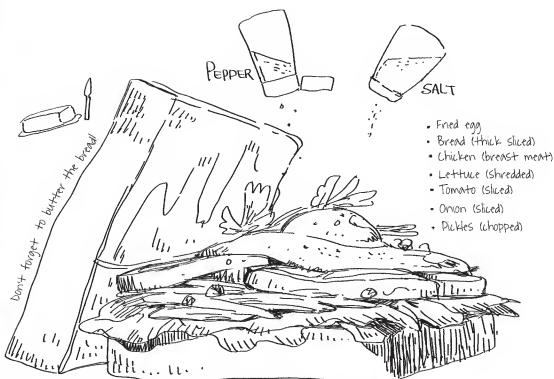
YES.
I'VE BEEN
MADE
RESPON-
SIBLE FOR
OTHER
ERRANDS
AS WELL.



WHAT,
LEAVING
ALREADY?

BUT FOR
TODAY, OUR
ERRAND
HERE IS
COMPLETE.
IT'S TIME
WE WENT
HOME.





The sandwich Silky made for Chise.

It may be a bit large,
but go ahead and take a big bite.



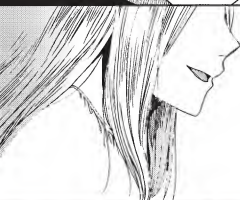
I
HEAR...

A CAT
MEOWING.



M
R
R
O
W
!

M
E
O
O
O
...



HELLO
THERE.
KITTY CAT.

PEOPLE SAY
YOU HAVE
NINE LIVES.

IF YOU
HAVE SO
MANY...

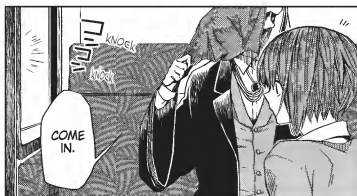
COULD
YOU MAYBE
GIVE ONE
TO ME...?

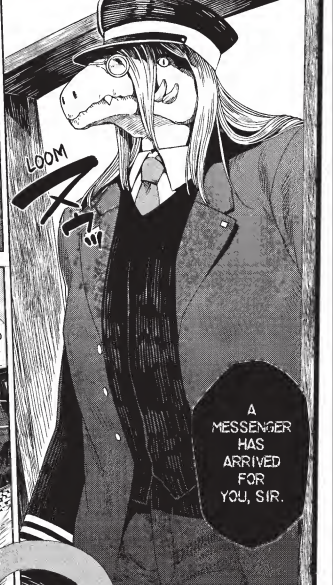
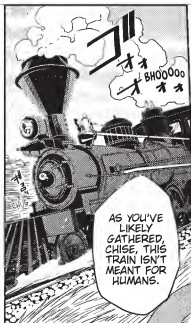




Chapter 4:
Everything must have a beginning.









As I'm on
my seventh,
it would be
far odder if
I couldn't
speak.



You find
that odd
in an age
where metal
boxes and
glowing
boards
can talk?

HUH?!
TH-THE
CAT
JUST
SPOKE?!

TMD
6



Ah.
They're
likely only
on their
first--or
third, at
most.

I'VE
ONLY EVER
HEARD
CATS
MEOW AND
STUFF.

ALLOP
N/1

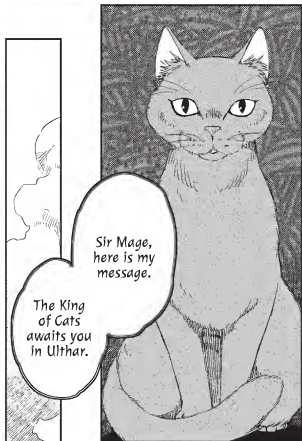


HAVEN'T
YOU
HEARD?

CATS
HAVE
NINE
LIVES.



UM...
YOUR
SEVENTH
WHAT?







Where have you been, you layabout?! Everyone's been looking for you!

Barney!



You smell an awful lot like some mages I used to hang around, Missy.

Hmm? I've smelled something like this before.

SNIFF
SNIFF



And what're you doing, having casual chit-chat with these guests? Show some respect, Jasper!

Oh, pipe down! The king told me to check things out! I've been on patrol.

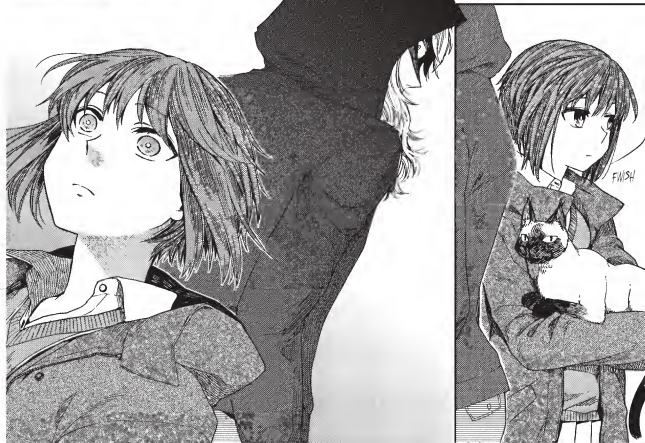
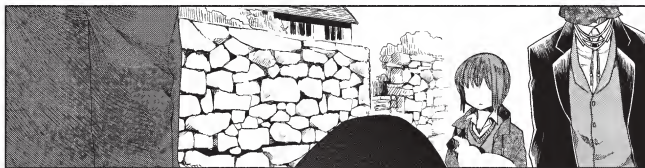


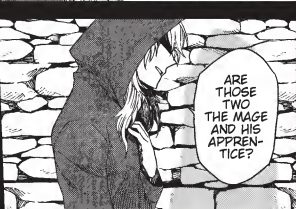
'ey! What's got you all prickly this time, Thorn Mage?

WELL, AREN'T YOU A LOOSE-TONGUED BEAST.



YONK









MATE...

We're pleased to see you. I was afraid that they'd send alchemists to us.

But that's neither here nor there. Welcome, both of you.



Yes. My name is Molly.

A girl?



And you are Chise, yes? I must say, I expected you to seem more eccentric, as you chose to be the mate of this boneheaded...gentleman.

Oh, hush!



SO PRETTY --!

UM... YOU'RE THE KING OF CATS?



They're as cunning as us cats, as greedy as pigs, as sly as serpents...

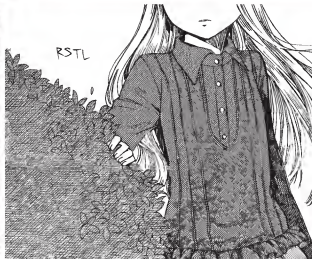
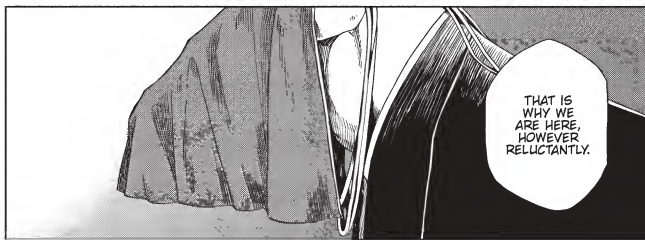
And as enslaved to their own desires as any demon.

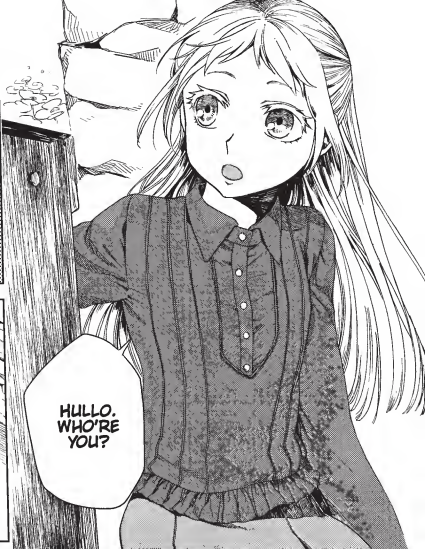
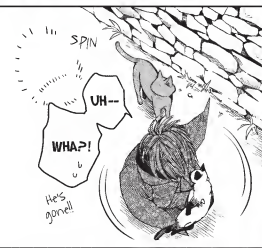
No cat would ever willingly go near one.

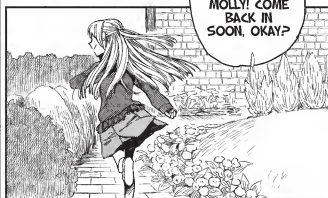


IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH ALCHEMISTS?

You bet there is, Missy. We can't stand 'em!







I DON'T LIKE CHILDREN. THEY'RE FAR TOO GOOD AT PERCEIVING THE TRUTH OF THINGS-- SOMETIMES INCLUDING ME, THROUGH MY ILLUSIONS.

WHY'D YOU DISAPPEAR LIKE THAT? YOU STARTLED ME.

Especially country children!

Well, then...
I'll take you to see the source of our trouble.

HUH?! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

SOMETHING'S NOT QUITE RIGHT HERE. I MEAN TO FIND OUT WHAT.

I'LL TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO INVESTIGATE SOME THINGS.

Long ago-- so long that even we who have nine lives were not there to see...





Afterwards,
the king
sacrificed
several of his
lives to bind the
festering blight
that remained
here.

RSTL

RSTL



To refresh
those
bindings
and keep
the blight
sealed
away.

Ever since,
the kings of
cats have been
honored. And in
turn, we kings
likewise sacrifice
our lives...

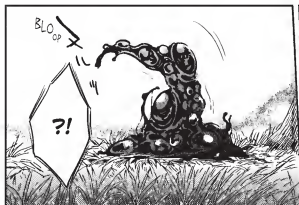


IN A
LAKE
...?



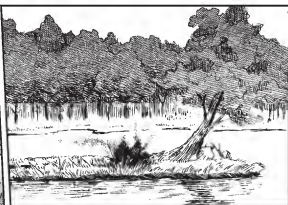
Your Sight
should
reveal it to
you, Missy.

On
that wee
spit in the
middle, to
be more
precise.



BLOP

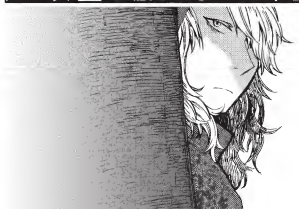
?!



But for
some
reason,
recently
it's begun
attempting
to escape.

That
location
was chosen
because
humans go
there so
rarely.

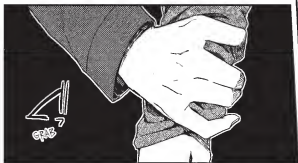
THERE'S
SOMETHING
REVOLTING
ABOUT IT
BESIDES ITS
APPEARANCE...

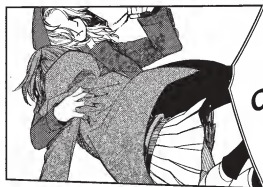


Do you
see it?

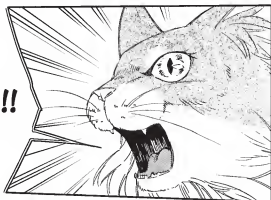
IT...IT
LOOKS
LIKE A
HUGE
BLACK
BLOB...!







Chise!!



SORRY.
NOTHING
PER-
SONAL.



WE'RE
FLYING
ABOVE
THE
LAKE?!



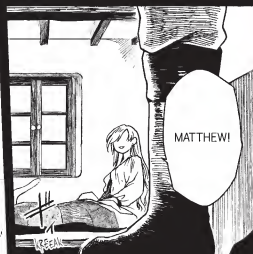
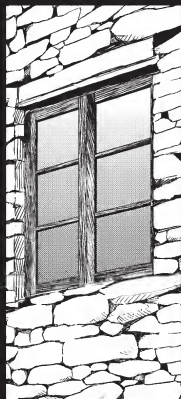
SPLOOSH

Chise
--!!

Chapter 5:
Misfortunes
seldom come singly.









THANK
YOU, BUT I
FEEL MUCH
STRONGER
TODAY.

TAKE IT
AND REST,
ALL RIGHT?

I WENT TO
THE MAGE
OUTSIDE TOWN.
SHE GAVE ME
SOME MEDICINE.



GO CATCH
A MOUSE
INSTEAD OF
LAZING ABOUT.
USELESS
FLEABAG!

UGH!
SHOO,
YOU!



HONESTLY,
THAT
CREATURE
LIKES NO ONE
BUT YOU.

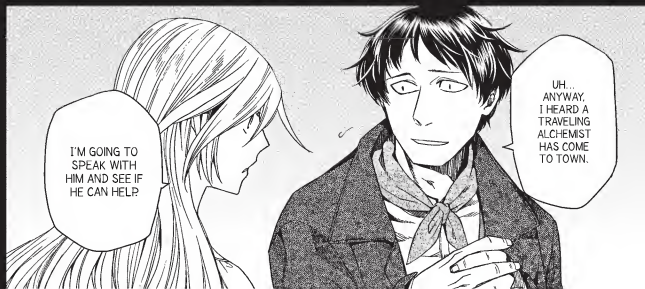
THE
BEAST
HISSED
AT ME!

HE'D
PROBABLY
LIKE YOU
MORE IF
YOU SPOKE
GENTLY.



WHAT
OF YOUR
FEVER?

YOU STILL
FEEL HOT!



I'M GOING TO
SPEAK WITH
HIM AND SEE IF
HE CAN HELP.

UH...
ANYWAY,
I HEARD A
TRAVELING
ALCHEMIST
HAS COME
TO TOWN.

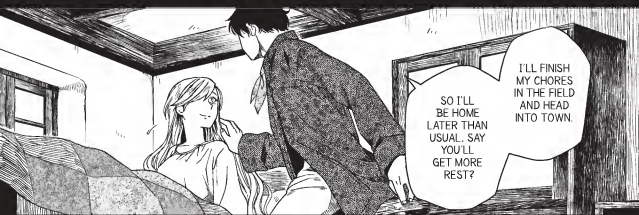


I KNEW FULL
WELL YOUR
HEALTH WAS
DELICATE WHEN
WE MARRIED.

NO NEED TO
APOLOGIZE,
MY LOVE.



I'M SO
SORRY FOR
PUTTING
YOU
THROUGH
THIS,
DARLING.



SO I'LL
BE HOME
LATER THAN
USUAL. SAY
YOU'LL
GET MORE
REST?

I'LL FINISH
MY CHORES
IN THE FIELD
AND HEAD
INTO TOWN.



HAVE
A GOOD
DAY.



YES,
DEAR.

I MEAN IT!
REST! NO
STAYING
UP TO KNIT
SOCKS OR
SCARVES
FOR ME!



SOME
DAYS...

I WISH I
HAD NINE
LIVES
LIKE YOU,
KITTY.



FLUMP
ホス



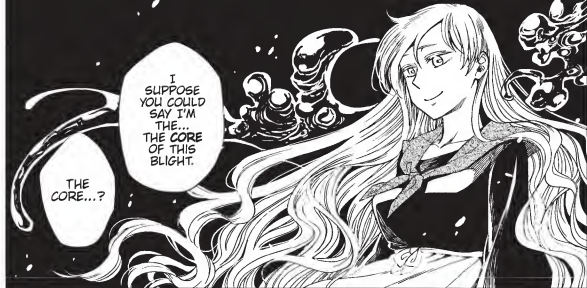
THIS
IS MY
SIN.



YOU
...?



MY
PUNISHMENT
FOR TAKING
HIS LOVE
FOR
GRANTED,
AND FOR
DOING
NOTHING.



THE
CORE...?

I
SUPPOSE
YOU COULD
SAY I'M
THE...
THE CORE
OF THIS
BLIGHT.



BUT I'M
EQUALLY
GUILTY,
AND
THAT'S
WHY I'M
HERE.

THE KING
OF CATS
TOLD YOU
IT WAS
A MAN,
REMEM-
BER?



HE CLINGS
TO ME
WITH
ALL HIS
STRENGTH.

IT'S
MY FAULT
THAT HE'S
BECOME
SOMETHING
SO VILE.



WHAT,
THAT I
DID IT?



BUT I
THOUGHT
--!

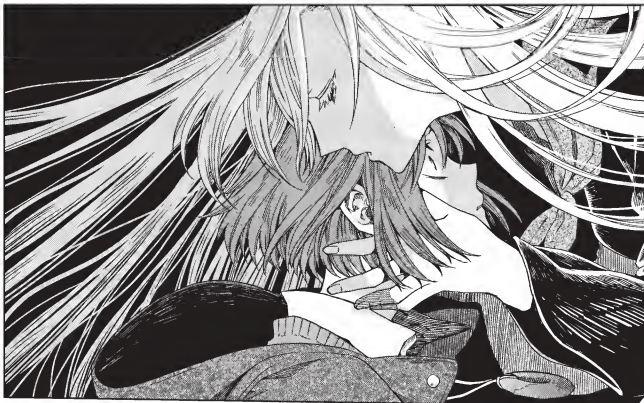
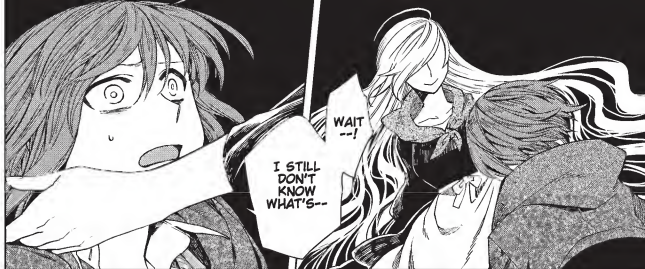
WAIT--
THIS BLOB
IS HIM?
HE'S THE
ONE WHO
KILLED
ALL THE
CATS?

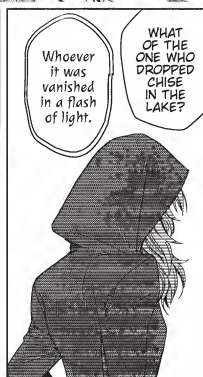


AND
FOR
MINE...

FOR HIS
SAKE...

PLEASE...









IT'S
CURRENTLY
TOO ACTIVE
TO BE
RESTRAINED
BY ANY SPELL
WE MIGHT
COBBLE
TOGETHER ON
THE SPOT.

IF WE
RENEW THE
SEAL, THE
PROBLEM
IS MERELY
POSTPONED.
AND BESIDES...

EVEREST
BLUB BLUB BLUB



WILL
YOU,
CHISE?

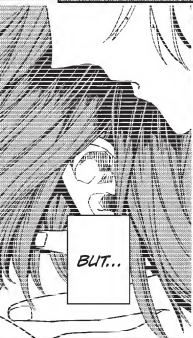
BUT
I THINK
YOU CAN
DO IT.



I'M AWARE
YOU'VE YET
TO STUDY
FORMAL
SPELL-
CRAFT...



THEREFORE,
WHAT WE
REQUIRE
IS A
SPELL OF
PURIFICA-
TION.



BUT...



IF I
FAIL...

WILL HE
BE DISAP-
POINTED
IN ME?



WHY?

HOW
COULD
SHE
SAY
THAT...?
AND
SHE
WAS SO
CALM
ABOUT
IT.

KILL US.



WHAT MADE
THEM TURN
INTO THAT...
THAT
THING...?

IF YOU
THINK
I CAN
DO IT...

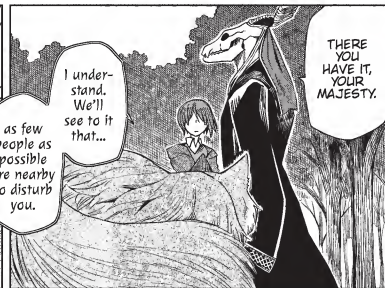
THEN
I
WILL.



Aye,
ma'am!

Would
you two
handle
that,
please?

as few
people as
possible
are nearby
to disturb
you.

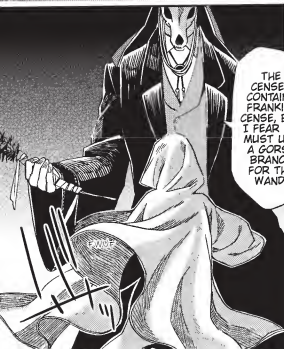
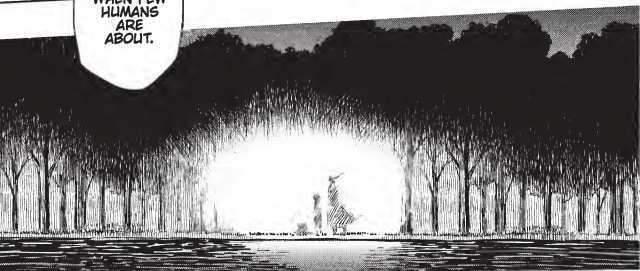


I under-
stand.
We'll
see to it
that...

THERE
YOU
HAVE IT,
YOUR
MAJESTY.



THEN
WE'LL
BEGIN AT
NIGHT,
WHEN FEW
HUMANS
ARE
ABOUT.



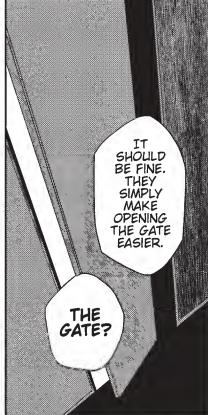
THE
CENSER
CONTAINS
FRANKIN-
CENSE, BUT
I FEAR WE
MUST USE
A GORSE
BRANCH
FOR THE
WAND.



HERE,
PUT IT
ON.

THIS
CLOAK WAS
PURIFIED IN
MOUNTAIN
SNOWMELT.





IT SHOULD BE FINE. THEY SIMPLY MAKE OPENING THE GATE EASIER.

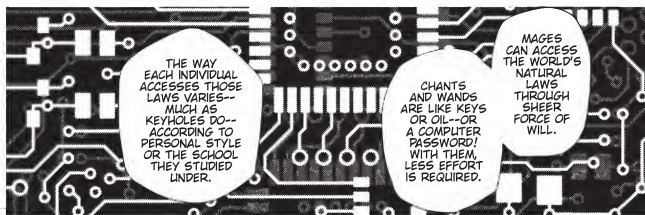
THE GATE?



BUT IT'LL STILL WORK?

WHAT ARE THEY FOR, THEN?

IT WOULD BE MORE USUAL FOR YOU TO USE YOUR OWN WAND AND CHANT, BUT AS YOU HAVE NEITHER, WE'LL DO WITHOUT.



THE WAY EACH INDIVIDUAL ACCESSES THOSE LAWS VARIES-- MUCH AS KEYHOLES DO-- ACCORDING TO PERSONAL STYLE OR THE SCHOOL THEY STUDIED UNDER.

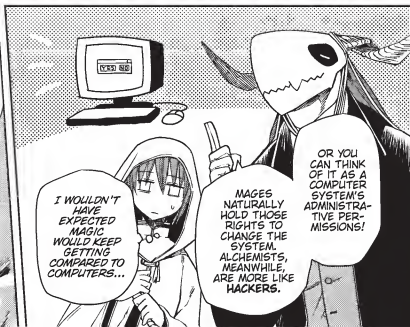
CHANTS AND WANDS ARE LIKE KEYS OR OIL--OR A COMPUTER PASSWORD! WITH THEM, LESS EFFORT IS REQUIRED.

MAGES CAN ACCESS THE WORLD'S NATURAL LAWS THROUGH SHEER FORCE OF WILL.



Exactly, sweetie. Right now, that stuff doesn't matter.

I'LL TEACH YOU IN MORE DETAIL LATER.



I WOULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED MAGIC WOULD KEEP GETTING COMPARED TO COMPUTERS...

MAGES NATURALLY HOLD THOSE RIGHTS TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM. ALCHEMISTS, MEANWHILE, ARE MORE LIKE HACKERS.

OR YOU CAN THINK OF IT AS A COMPUTER SYSTEM'S ADMINISTRATIVE PERMISSIONS!



It's been
a while,
hasn't it?

AN
ARIEL!

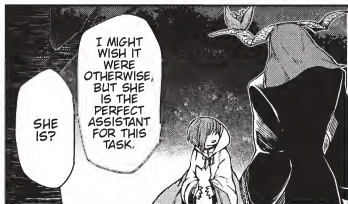


AH!

If you
submerge
something
in deep,
cold water,
you can
preserve
it for a long
time.

But to
obliterate
it, you
want air.

Flesh and
bone, trees
and stone,
we wear it
all down to
dust.



SHE
IS?

I MIGHT
WISH IT
WERE
OTHERWISE,
BUT SHE
IS THE
PERFECT
ASSISTANT
FOR THIS
TASK.



Water
flows just
like air,
but it's
better for
holding
and
storing
things.



You bet!
No one's
better at
purifying or
extinguishing
things than
we are!



BUT WHY
AM I
DOING
THIS AND
NOT YOU,
ELIAS?

HMM?



So that's
why we're
best for
this job,
see?

Leave
it to
me,
little
robin.
♪

I DO.
PLEASE
GUIDE ME
WELL,
NEIGHBOR.



MY
AFFINITY
HAS ALWAYS
BEEN FOR THE
SHADOWS.
IT'S NOT
IDEAL FOR
THIS.



OH, ER...
PATHETIC
THOUGH IT
MAY SEEM,
I'M NOT
TERRIBLY
GIFTED AT
THIS SORT
OF SPELL.



SWF



PICTURE
A STRONG,
FRESH SPRING
BREEZE THAT
BLOWS AWAY
THE LAST
REMNANTS
OF WINTER...

AND WISH
FOR IT TO
CARRY
THE BLIGHT
AWAY, TOO.

ALL WILL
BE WELL,
CHISE.

SIMPLY
ENVISION
WHAT YOU
WANT TO
ACCOM-
PLISH.



OKAY.

DO THAT,
AND THE
ARIEL WILL
GUIDE
YOU THE
REST OF
THE WAY.

YOU
MUST
LOVE THE
WORLD.

CHISE...



ALL YOU
NEED DO
NOW IS
OPEN IT.

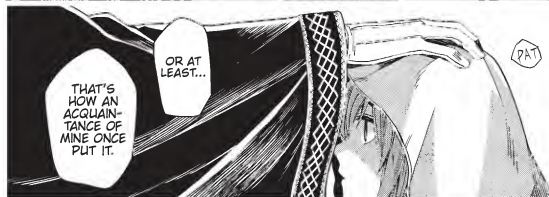


THERE IS
ALREADY
A KEY IN
THE LOCK
THAT
HOLDS
YOU.



IT'S TRUE
THAT THE
WORLD IN
WHICH YOU
GREW UP
WAS NOT
KIND...

BUT IT
WAS NOT
YOUR
ENEMY.



THAT'S
HOW AN
ACQUAIN-
TANCE OF
MINE ONCE
PUT IT.

OR AT
LEAST...

PAT



ELIAS...

DO YOU
LOVE THE
WORLD?



GOOD
QUESTION.

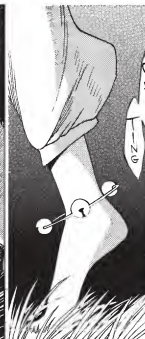


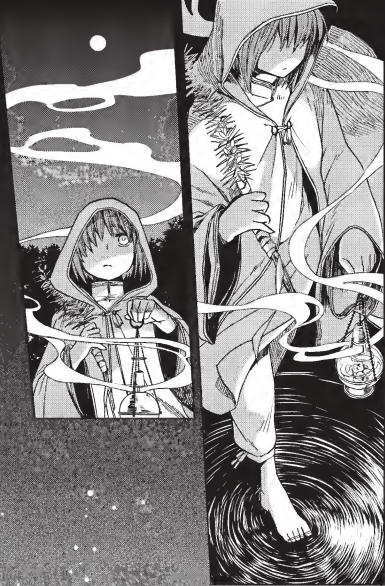
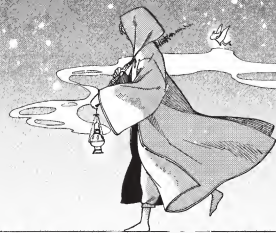
THAT WASN'T
A DIRECT
ANSWER...

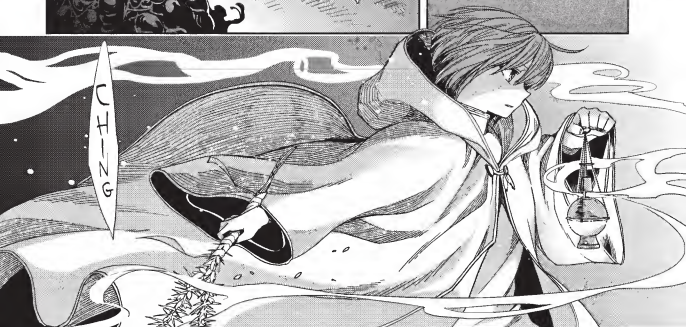
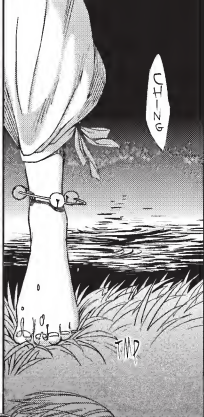


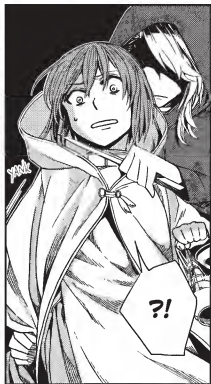
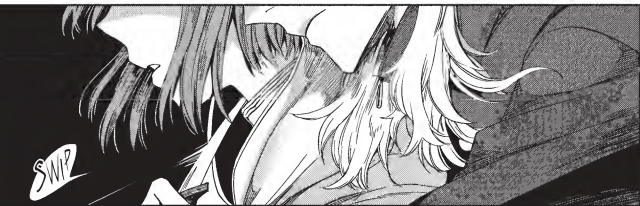
HE MAY
HAVE A
BARE
SKULL
FOR A
HEAD...
BUT HE'S
PRETTY
GOOD AT
SAYING
THINGS
WITH HIS
EYES.

AND YET
SOMEHOW
IT STRUCK
ME AS
CERTAIN.





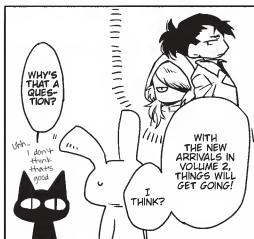
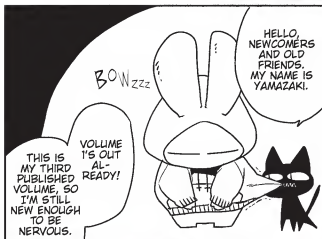
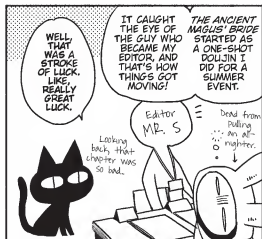






To be continued...

Something That
Could Be Called an
AFTERWORD



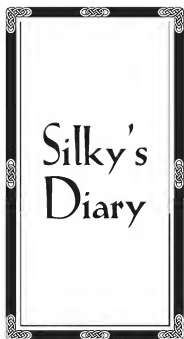
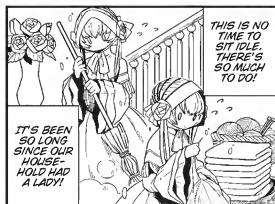
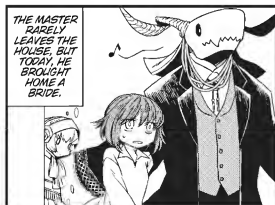


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The fairy tale continues...

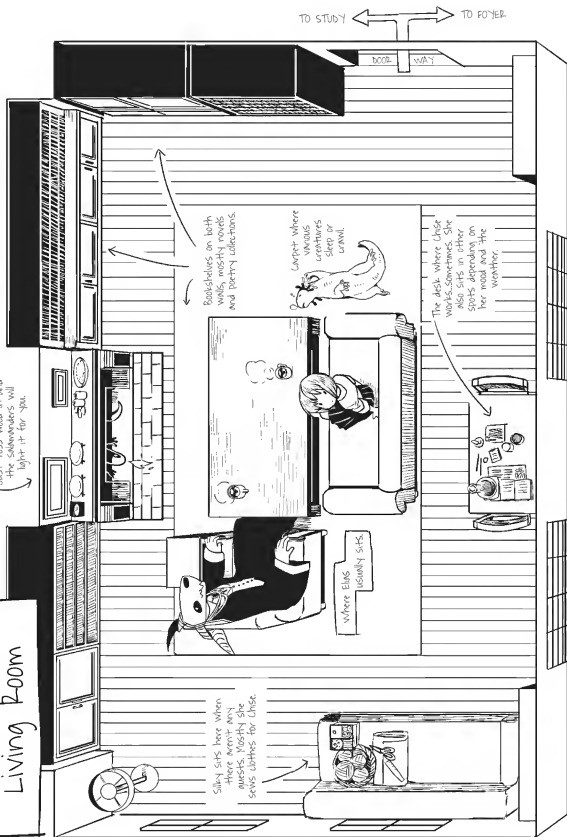
The Ancient Magus' Bride
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HEARTH

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the Samwenders will
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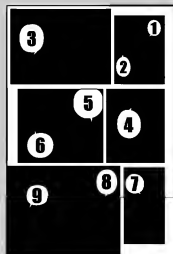
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